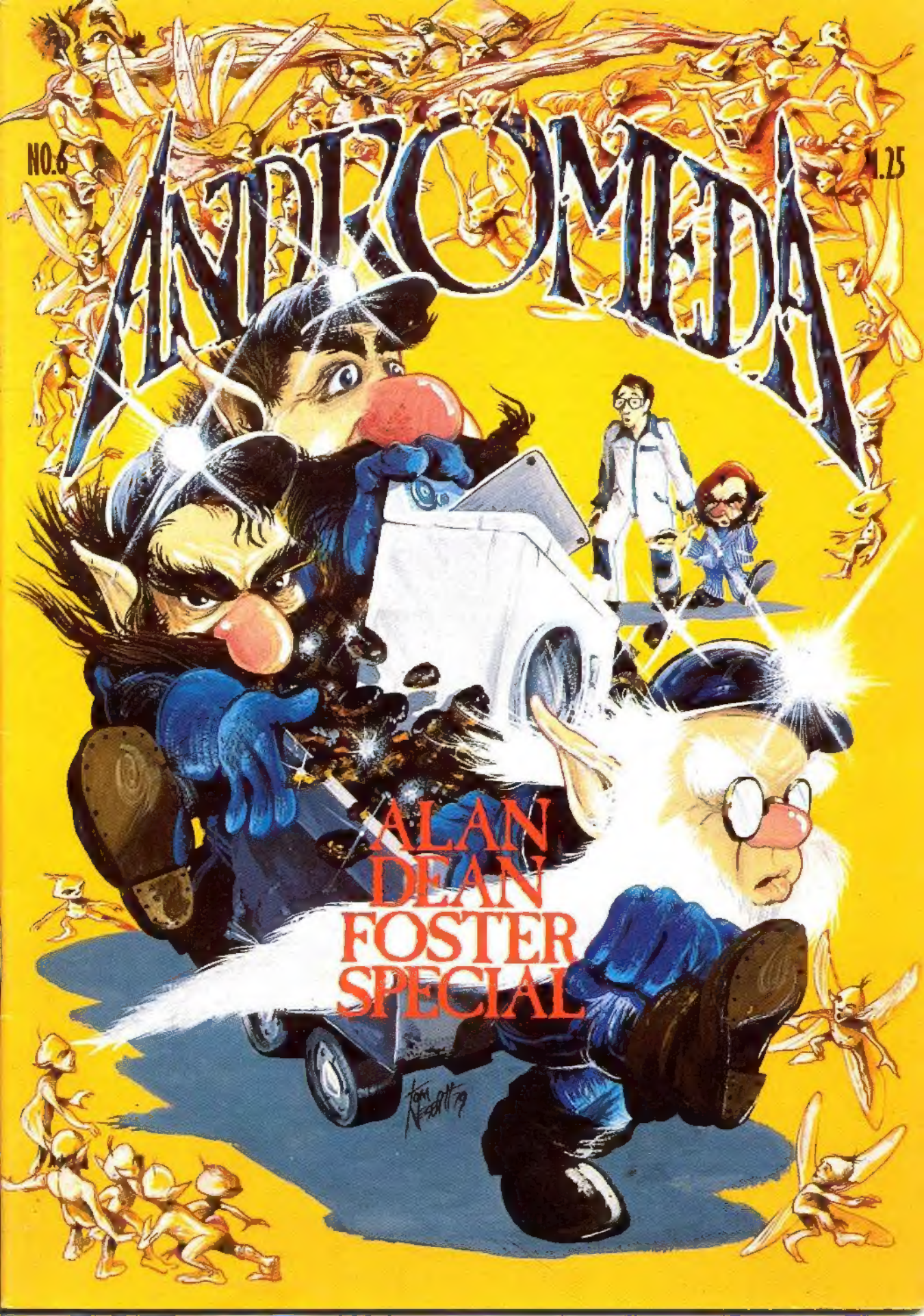

NO.6
1.25
ANDROMEDA
ALAN
DEAN
FOSTER
SPECIAL

ALAN DEAN FOSTER

Born in New York City in 1946, Foster was raised in Los Angeles, California. After receiving a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master of Fine Arts in Motion Pictures from UCLA in 1968-9, he worked for two years as a public relations copywriter in a small Studio City, Calif. firm.

His writing career began when August Derleth bought a long letter of Foster's in 1968 and published it as a short story in his biannual **Arkham Collector Magazine.** Sales of short fiction to other magazines followed. His first try at a novel, **The Tar-Aiym Krang**, was published by Ballantine Books in 1972.

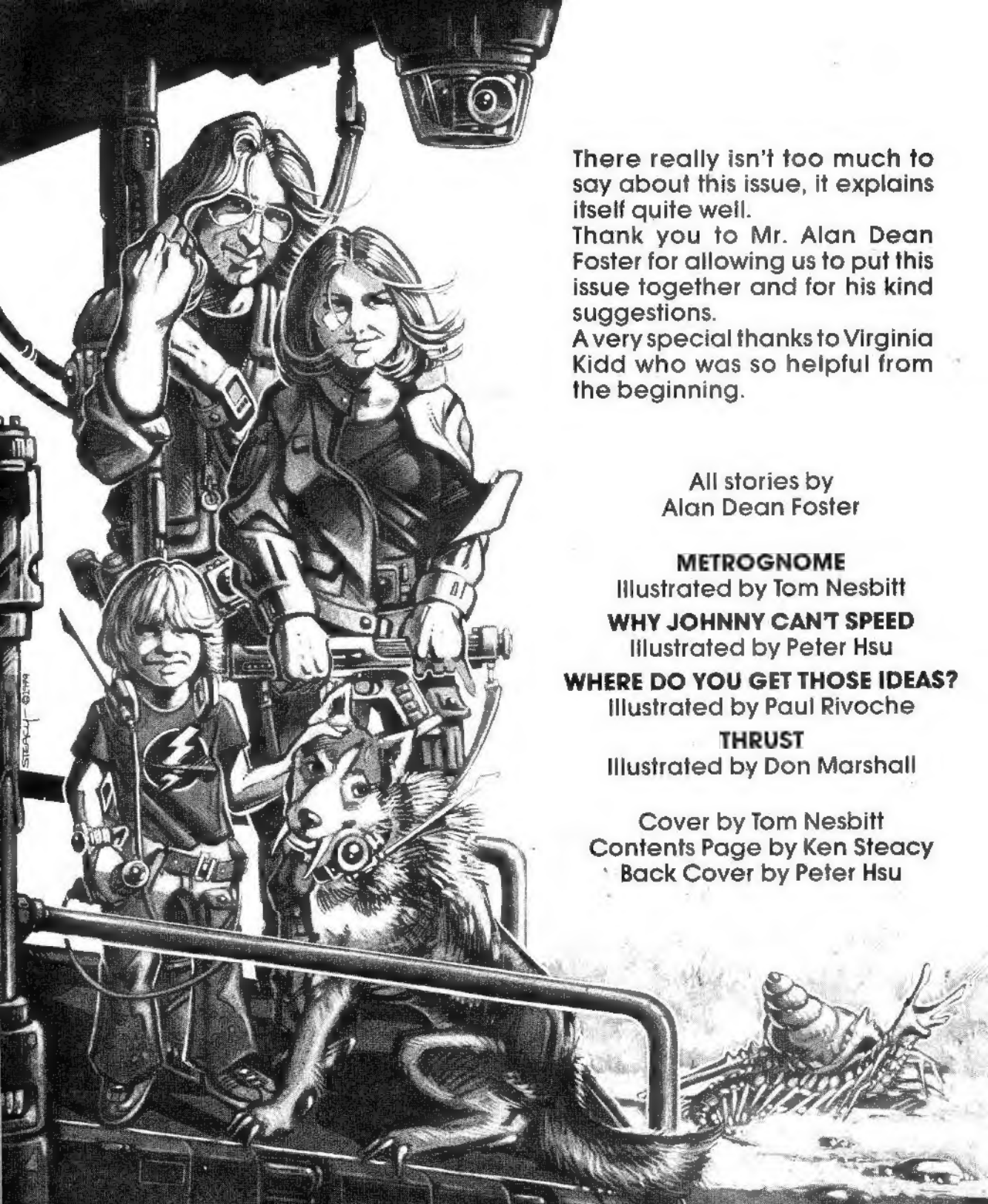
In addition to the **Arkham Collector**, Foster's sometimes humorous, occasionally poignant, but always entertaining short stories have appeared in such magazines as **Analog, If, Galaxy, Fantasy & Fiction, Galileo, Issac Asimov's, Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, Adam, Art & Story,** and **COQ**, as well as in original anthologies and several "Best of the Year" collections. A collection, **With Friends Like These**, was published by Del Rey books in 1977.

Much of Foster's longer work takes place within the framework of a future society known as the Universe of the Commonwealth, where mankind has forged a semi-symbiotic relationship with a race of insects, the Thranx. In addition to publication in the United States and the rest of the English-speaking world, these novels of high adventure have been translated into Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish and Flemish. Foster is also the author of several movie novelizations such as **Dark Star** and **Luana**, besides the ten volume **Star Trek Log** series. The latter have sold over 1½ million copies in the U.S. alone. Among his other works are talking records, radio and screenplays, the sequel novel to the film **Star Wars (Splinter Of The Mind's Eye)**, and the story for **Star Trek Two—The Movie.**

Though restricted (for now) to one world, Foster's love for the far-away and exotic has led him to travel extensively through Asia and the isles of the Pacific, including a sojourn in Tahiti where he lived with the family of a local gendarme. Besides traveling he enjoys both classical and rock music, old films (particularly animation and documentary), basketball, body surfing, and karate. He has taught screenwriting, literature and film history at **UCLA** and Los Angeles City College.

Currently he resides in Big Bear Lake, California with his wife JoAnn (who was raised forty miles from Robert E. Howard's home town of Cross Plains, Texas). She is reputed to have the only extant recipe for Barbarian Cream Pie. They share a many-roomed home with three cats (Saturn, Mittens and Orca), three dogs (Sasha, Pepper and Valentine), two hundred house plants who assisted in the writing of **Midworld**, assorted renegade coyotes and raccoons, and the ensorceled chair of the nefarious Dr. John Dee.

Foster is presently at work on several new novels and film projects.....



There really isn't too much to say about this issue, it explains itself quite well.

Thank you to Mr. Alan Dean Foster for allowing us to put this issue together and for his kind suggestions.

A very special thanks to Virginia Kidd who was so helpful from the beginning.

All stories by
Alan Dean Foster

METROGNOME
Illustrated by Tom Nesbitt

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T SPEED
Illustrated by Peter Hsu

WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE IDEAS?
Illustrated by Paul Rivoche

THRUST
Illustrated by Don Marshall

Cover by Tom Nesbitt
Contents Page by Ken Steacy
Back Cover by Peter Hsu

ANDROMEDA Vol 2 No. 6 November 1979. Published by Andromeda Publications. Owned and operated by Silver Snail Comics Ltd. 323 Queen St. W. Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 2A9. Ron Van Leeuwen and Dean Motter associate editors. Cover © 1979 Tom Nesbitt. Contents Page © 1979 Ken Steacy. Back cover © 1979 Peter Hsu. All stories © 1979 Alan Dean Foster, used with the kind permission of his agent Virginia Kidd. All illustrative material is © 1979 by the respective artists. All rights reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons living or dead are intended or should be inferred. Founding publisher Bill Paul. Distributed by Firefly Books, 2 Essex Ave. Unit 5, Thornhill, Ontario, Canada.

Printed in Canada

ALAN DEAN FOSTER'S

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T SPEED

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Merwin:

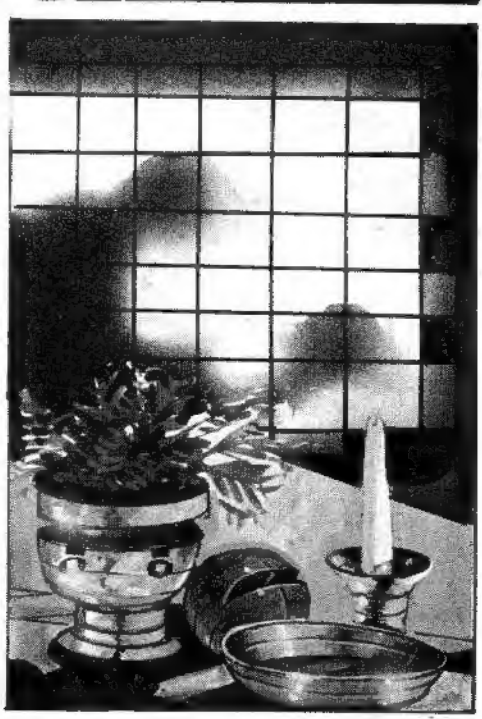
It is my painful duty to have to inform you that your son, Robert L. Merwin, was killed in commuter action on the southbound San Diego Freeway in the vicinity of the second Irvine Ranch Turnoff, Orange county.

From what our evaluators have been able to reconstruct, young Robert apparently disputed a lane change with a black GM Caddy Marauder. No violation of the North American Traffic Code has come to my notice, but I will keep you informed should any such come to light. Normal investigations are proceeding. The other vehicle involved is known to Orange County Police. Its owner was questioned but not detained. Details and particulars are enclosed. Please accept my personal condolences.

Yours sincerely,
George Wilson Angel
Chief, Southern California Division
California District Highway Patrol

Encl: 1 rpt. accid.
1 rpt. coroner

ADAPTATION-
-Bp NICHOL
ART-
-PETER HSU
LETTERING
-PAUL MACLISKER



GODDAMN IT MYRTLE I TOLD HIM! I *TOLD* HIM!

'LOOK, SON. IF YOU INSIST ON DRIVING ALL THE WAY TO DIEGO BY YOURSELF, AT LEAST TAKE THE PONTIAC! HAVE SOME ***SENSE***, I TOLD HIM! I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WITH THE KIDS ***THESE DAYS***, HON. YOU'D THINK HE'D LISTEN TO ME JUST THIS ONCE, WOULDN'T YOU? ***ME***. WHO ONCE DROVE ALL THE WAY FROM INDIANAPOLIS TO L.A. AND WAS CHALLENGED ONLY TWICE ON THE WAY- ***ONLY TWICE***, MYRT. BUT NO, HE HADDA BE A ***BIG SHOT!*** 'LISTEN DAD. THIS IS SOMETHING I'VE GOT TO WORK OUT FOR MYSELF, WITH MY OWN CAR.' HE TELLS ME! I KNEW HE'D HAVE TROUBLE IN THAT ***VW*** AND I OFTEN TOLD HIM SO, TOO.

BUT NO, ALL HE COULD THINK OF WAS TO SAY, 'POPS, THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN IS I'VE GOTTA OUTMANEUVER SOME OTHER CAR, RIGHT? YOU'VE SEEN THE WAY THAT BUG CORNERS, HAVEN'T YOU, HUH? AND IF I GET INTO A TOUGH SCRAPE, ANY OTHER V.W. ON THE ROAD IS BOUND BY OATH TO SUPPORT ME, - IN ***MOST ACTIONS*** ANYWAY.'

WHATTA YOU TELL A KID LIKE THAT, MYRT? HOW DO YOU GET THROUGH TO HIM?

I DON'T KNOW EITHER, DEAR. I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE HAD TO DRIVE DOWN THERE. WHY COULDN'T HE HAVE TAKEN THE ***TRANS***, FRANK? ***WHY?***

OH, YOU KNOW WHY. WHAT WOULD HIS '***FRIENDS***' HAVE SAID? 'HERE'S BOBBY MERWIN, TOO SCARED TO DRIVE HIS OWN ROD.' AND THAT SORT OF CRUD. STILL, FELT HE HAD TO PROVE HIMSELF A MAN, THE ***IDIOT!*** HE'D ALREADY SOLOED ON THE FREEWAYS - WHY DID HE FEEL THE NEED TO TRY A CROSS-COUNTRY EXPEDITION? BUT DAMN IT, IF HE HAD TO DISPLAY HIS GUTS, WHY COULDN'T HE DAVE DONE SO IN THE BIG CAR? NOT EVEN A PROFESSIONALLY CUSTOMIZED ***VW*** CAN MOUNT MUCH STUFF.

AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, YOU'D THINK HE'D HAVE HAD THE SENSE TO SHY OFF THAT KIND OF AN ARGUMENT? HE HAD DRIVER'S TRAINING! WHO EVER HEARD OF A ***VW*** DISPUTING POSITION WITH A ***CAD - A MARAUDER***, NO LESS! WHERE WERE HIS 'FRIENDS,' HUH? I WARNED HIM ABOUT THE LIGHT STRETCHES BETWEEN HERE AND DIEGO, WHERE FLOW IS LIGHT, HELP IS MORE THAN A HORNBLAST AWAY AND SOME PSYCHO CAN SURPRISE YOU FROM BEHIND AN ON-RAMP!

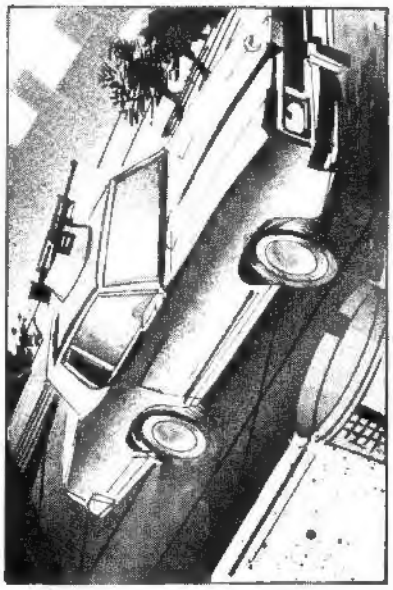
YOU KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO NOW, I SUPPOSE?

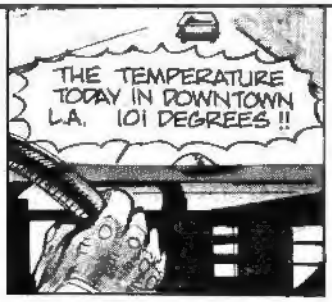
BOB WAS TAKING THAT GIFT TO A FRIEND IN DIEGO. I'M BOUND TO SEE THAT IT'S DELIVERED.
I DON'T SUPPOSE...
NO, HON, I'M TAKING IT DOWN MYSELF. I REFUSE TO SHIP IT AND I CERTAINLY WON'T RIDE THE TRANS. NOT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.
NO, I'M GOING DOWN THE SAME WAY BOB WENT, BY THE SAME ROUTE. I'LL HAVE THE J.J. TUNED FIRST THOUGH.
I SUPPOSE YOU'LL AT LEAST TAKE IT IN TO...
HECTOR? CERTAINLY. IN SPITE OF WHAT HE CHARGES, HE'S DAMN WELL WORTH THE MONEY. BEST MECHANIC AROUND. I ENJOY DOING BUSINESS WITH HIM, KNOW I'M GETTING MY CREDITS WORTH, AT LEAST. WE COULDN'T HAVE ME GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE-NOW COULD WE? WOULDN'T WANT HIM TO GET THE IDEA WE'RE PREJUDICED OR SOMETHING. I'VE BEEN GOING TO HIM, FOR OH, FIVE YEARS. ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT HE IS.
GOING ALL THE WAY DOWN TO DIEGO EH, MR. MERWIN?
YEAH. SO YOU'LL UNDERSTAND HECTOR, WHEN I SAY THE J.J.'S GOT TO BE IN TIPTOP SHAPE.
CIERTAMENTE! YOU WANT TO OPEN HER UP, PLEASE?

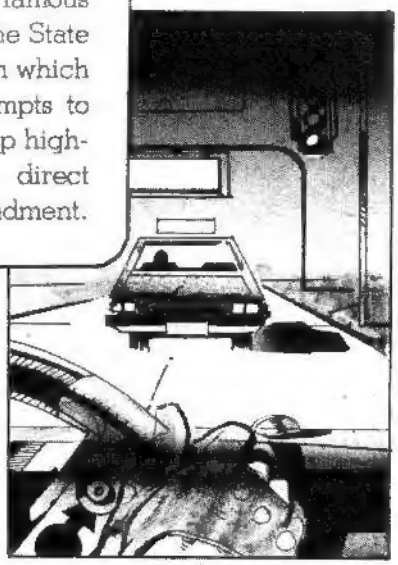
WELL, MR MERWIN, FROM WHAT I CAN SEE YOUR ENGINE AT LEAST IS IN EXCELLENT CONDITION, YES, EXCELLENT! YOU WANT ME TO FILL 'ER UP?
IF I MAY ASK, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GO?
HMM. I'LL GO DOWN BURBANK TO THE SAN DIEGO FREEWAY AND GET ON THERE. IT'D BE A LITTLE BIT FASTER TO GET ON THE VENTURA, BUT ON A TRIP OF THIS LENGTH, THAT LITTLE BIT OF TIME SAVED WOULD BE NEGLIGIBLE AND I DONT SEE THE POINT IN FIGHTING THE INTERCHANGES.
QUITE WISE. YOU KNOW, MR. MERWIN, YOU GOT TWO PRETTY BAD STRETCHES ON THIS TRIP. VERY IFFY. I READ ABOUT YOUR SON, I SORROW. THE "JORNADA DE LA MUERTE COMES EVENTUALLY TO ALL OF US.
COULDN'T BE HELPED, BOB DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT WAS - WHAT HE WAS GETTING INTO, THAT'S ALL. I BLAME MYSELF, TOO, BUT WHAT COULD I DO? HE WAS EIGHTEEN AND BY LAW THERE WASN'T ANYTHING I COULD DO TO HOLD HIM BACK.
A CAD WASN'T IT?
HE SIMPLY TOOK ON MORE THAN HE COULD HANDLE.
IT WAS!

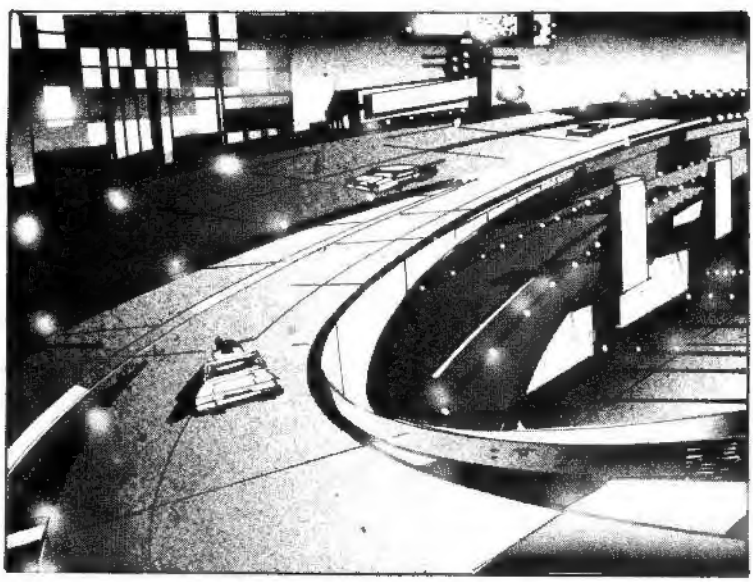
WHAT ARE YOU GIVING ME-EXPLOSIVES OR ARMOUR-PIERCING?
MIXED!
BOTH, ALTERNATING SEQUENCE. TRUE, IT'S MORE EXPENSIVE, BUT AFTER ALL, YOUR SON'S CAR WAS DESTROYED BY A MARAUDER-A BLACK ONE.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT, HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?
OH, AMONG THE TRADE WORD GETS PASSED ALONG. I KNOW OF THIS PARTICULAR VEHICLE, I BELIEVE. OWNER DOES A LOT OF HIS OWN WORK. I UNDERSTAND.
THAT'S TOUGH TO TANGLE WITH MR. MERWIN. MIGHT YOU BE THINKING OF..
NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'LL BUMP INTO ON THE ROAD THESE DAYS, HECTOR. I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO RUN FROM A DOG-FIGHT.
I DID NOT MEAN TO IMPLY THAT YOU WOULD. WE ALL KNOW YOUR DRIVER-COMBAT RECORD, MR. MERWIN. THERE ARE NOT ALL THAT MANY ACES LIVING IN THE VALLEY.
YES, WELL YOU WATCH YOURSELF, MR MERWIN. A MARAUDER IS BAD NEWS STRAIGHT FROM THE FACTORY. PROPERLY CUSTOMIZED, IT COULD MOUNT ENOUGH STUFF TO TAKE ON A GREYHOUND BUSNOUGHT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME HECTOR. I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF. BESIDES, THE J.J. MOUNTS A FEW SURPRISES OF HER OWN.

Mass Trans required and still requires a lot of money. One way in which the governments involved (meaning those of most industrial, developed nations) went about obtaining the necessary amounts was to cut back the expensive motorized forces needed to regulate the far-flung freeway systems. As the cutbacks increased it gradually became accepted custom among the remaining overworked patrols to allow drivers to settle their own disputes. This custom was finalized by the Supreme Court's handing down of the famous Briver vs. Matthews and the State of Texas decision of '79, in which it was ruled that all attempts to regulate interstate, nonstop highway systems were in direct violation of the First Amendment.

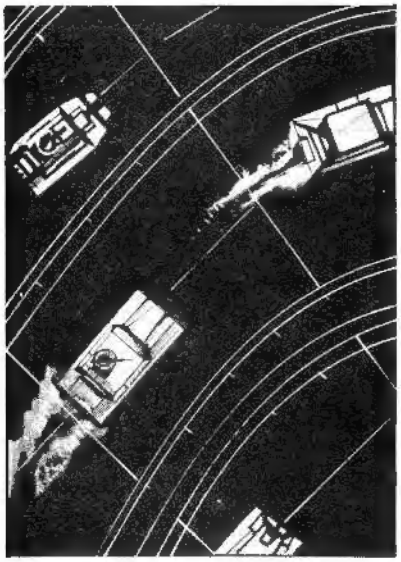


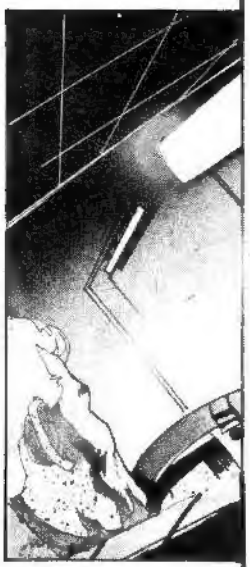


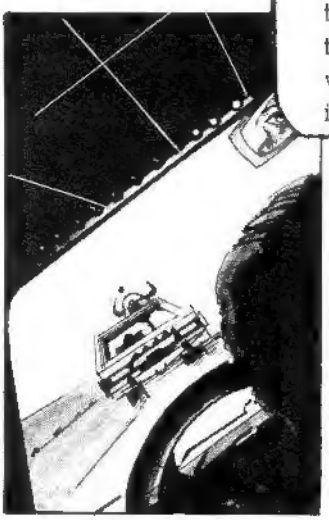


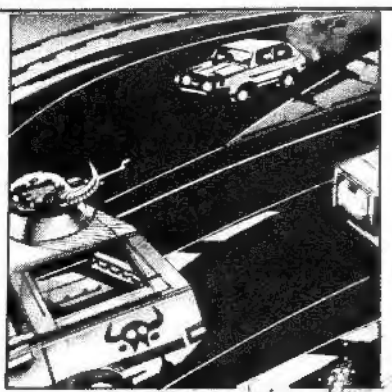


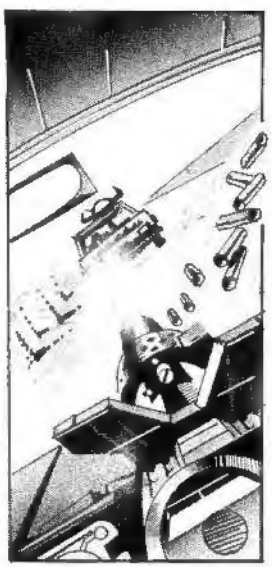
Any motorist who didn't feel up to potential arguments was provided a safe, quiet alternative means of transportation in the new Mass Trans systems, most of which ran down the center and sides of the familiar freeway routes, high above the frantic traffic. Benefits were immediate. Less pollution from even the fine turbine-steam-electric engines of the private autos, an end to many downtown parking problems in the big cities—and more. For the first time since their inception the freeways, even at rush hour, became negotiable at speeds close to those envisioned by their builders. And psychiatrists began to advise driving as excellent therapy for persons afflicted with violent or even homicidal instincts.

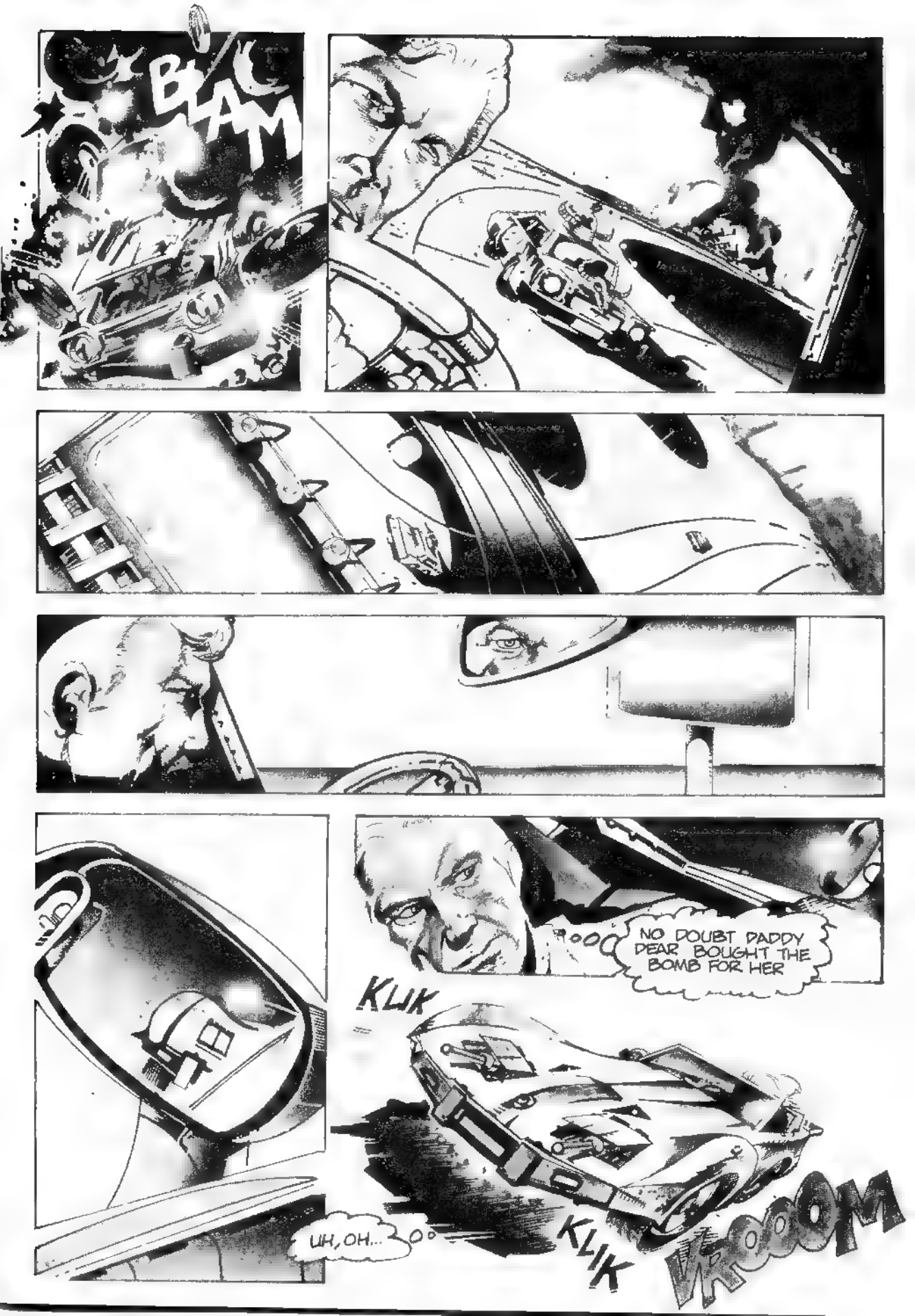


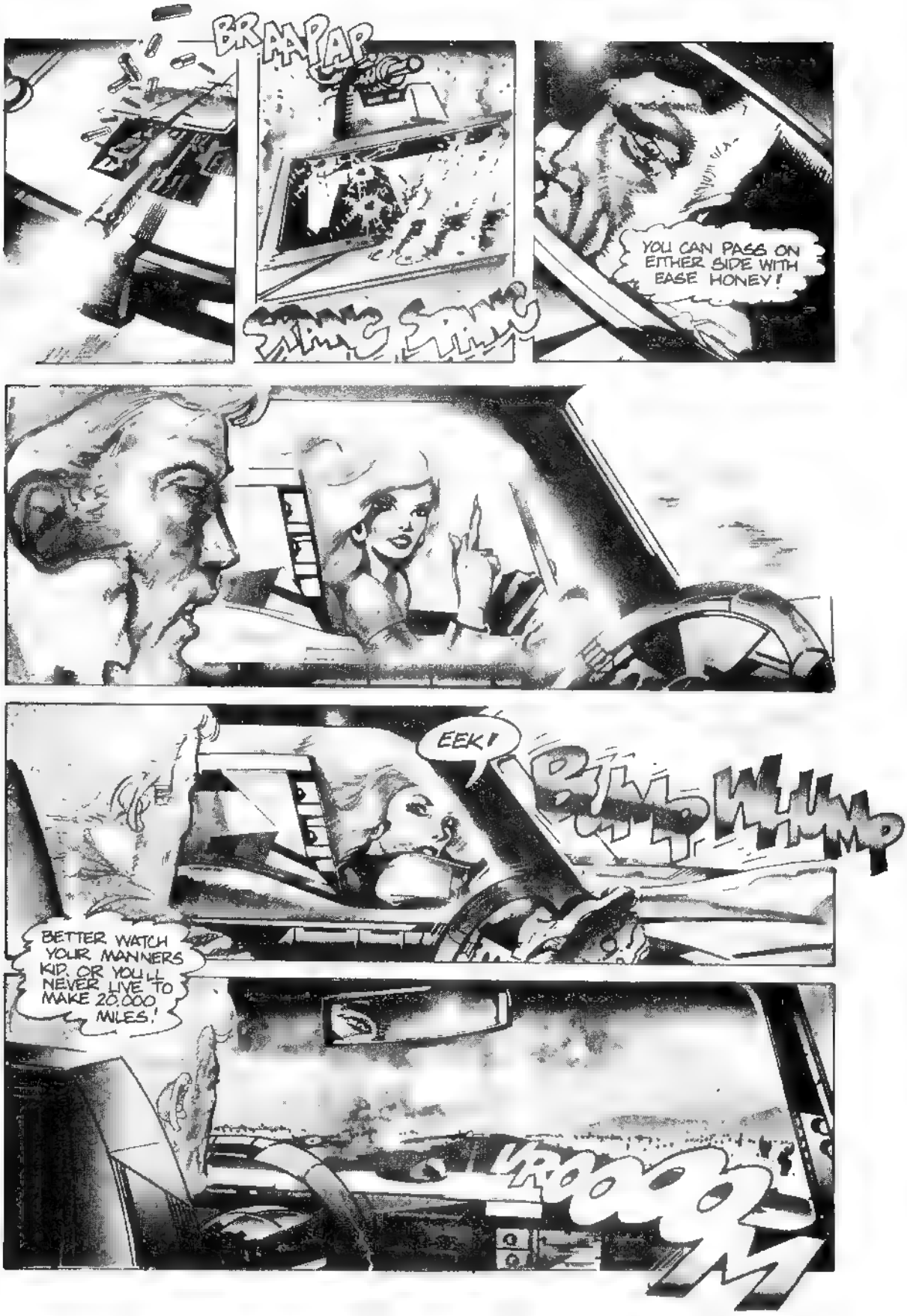









BLAM
NO DOUBT DADDY DEAR BOUGHT THE BOMB FOR HER
KLIK
KLIK
UH, OH...
KROOOM


BRAAPAP
YOU CAN PASS ON EITHER SIDE WITH EASE HONEY!
EEK!
BETTER WATCH YOUR MANNERS KID OR YOU'LL NEVER LIVE TO MAKE 20,000 MILES!

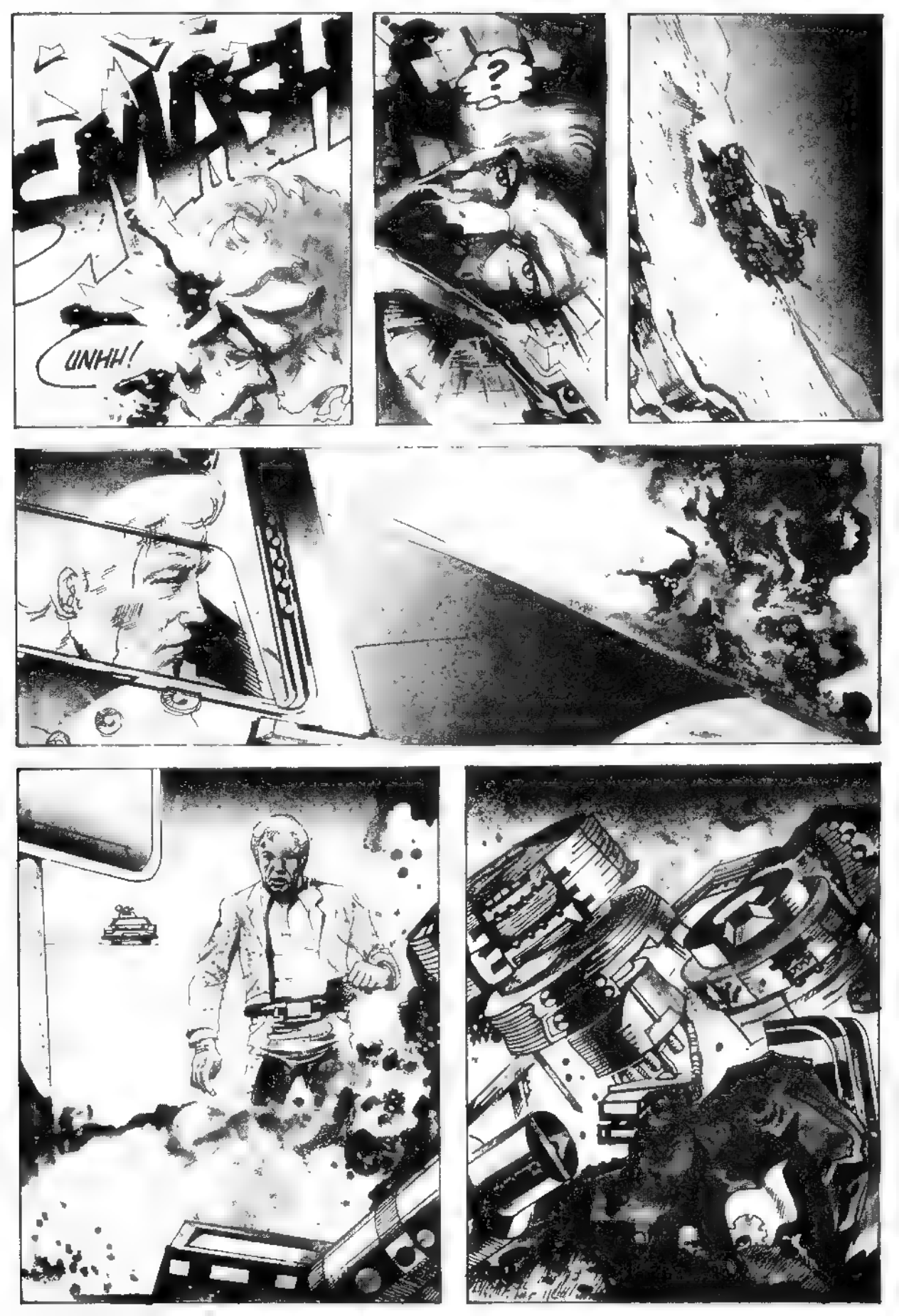
VROOOOOM

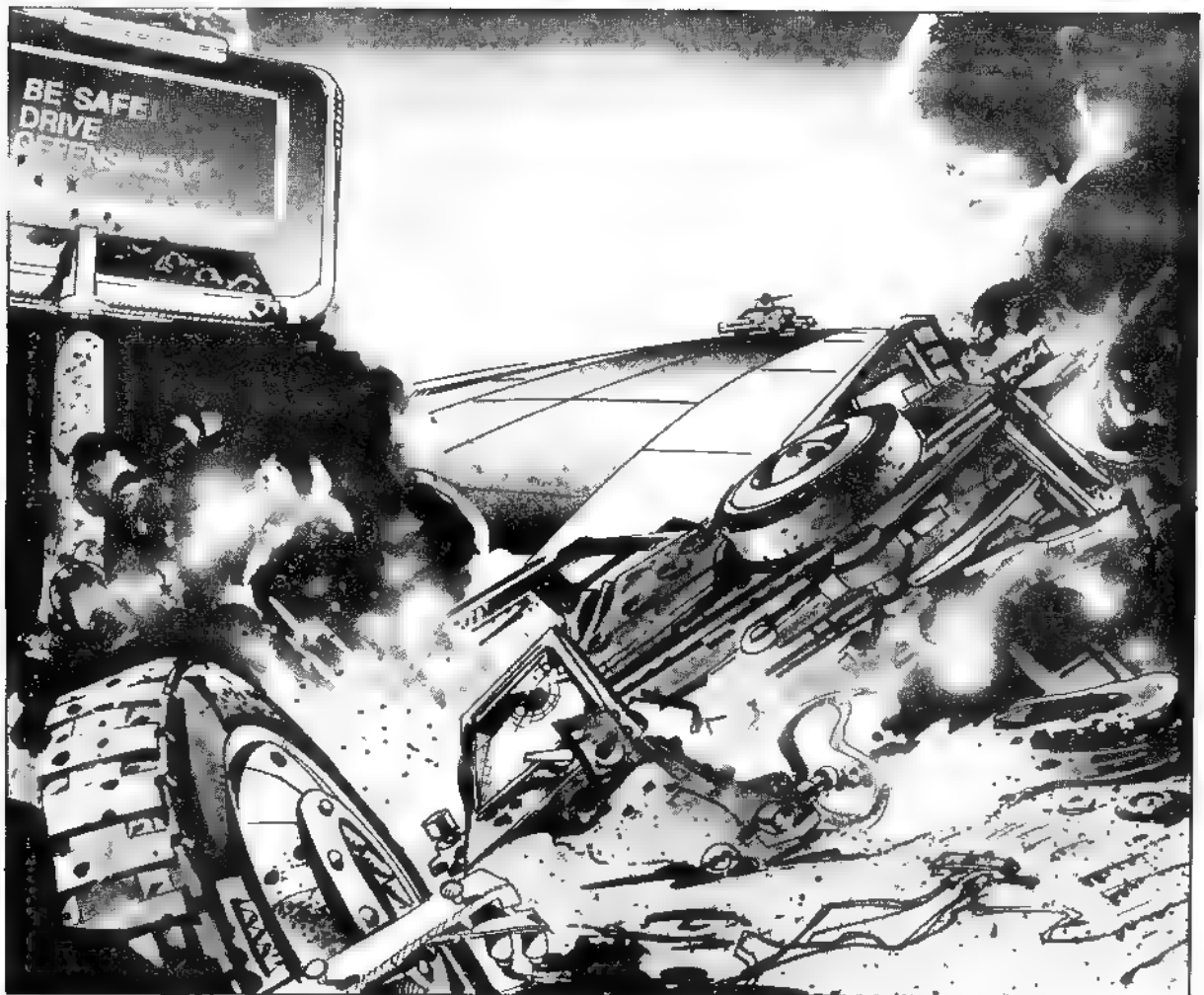
MAYBE I COULD BUY SOME LAND OUT HERE.
NOT ANOTHER MOJAVE, MAYBE, BUT STILL.
?

SO IT'S YOU FELLA!!
YOU'RE SOUTH OF YOUR TERRITORY!!
KLIK KLIK KLIK
WAOOM

UNH!
KA-WHAM
MY GOD!
A MARK IV ROCKET LAUNCHER
POOSH
BRIAN
KRAKT
FLIPPED
OVER
THE
TOWER

KRASH
AARRGH!
CHANCE TIME, FRANK BABY
VROOOM
VROOOM
PING!
REMEMBER..
SALT LAKE CITY!!
THWUNK
THWUNK
SCREEE!

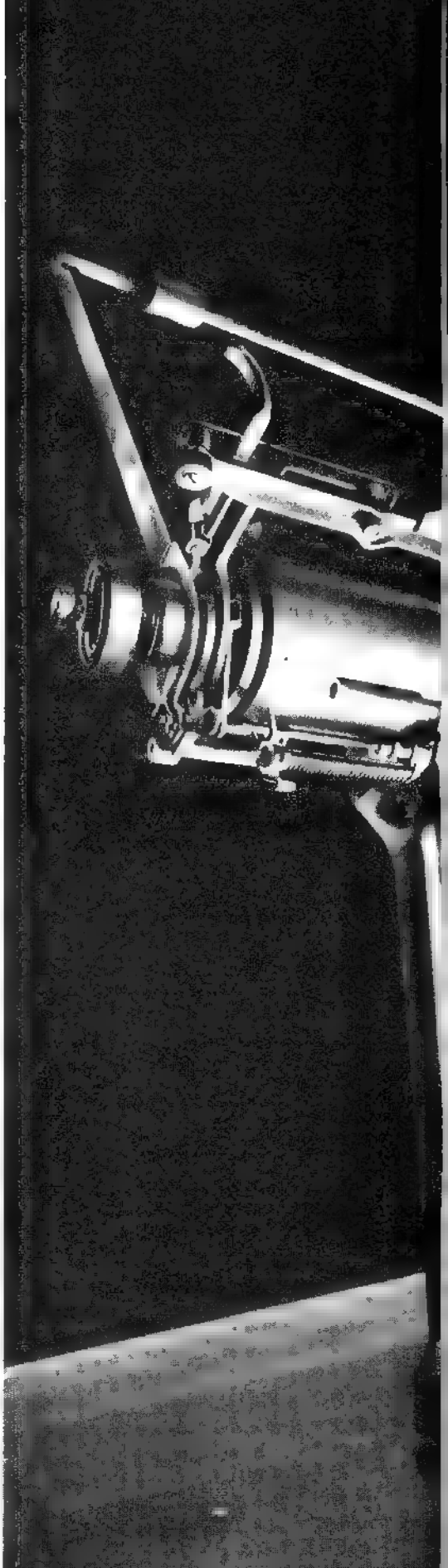

CRASH
UNHH!
?



DEDICATION: SOUND EFFECTS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO ALEX TOTH.

WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE IDEAS?

You ask me where do I get my ideas and I tell you I don't know
But
It doesn't matter because if I could explain it I wouldn't get
Them and therein lies a devastating paradox
Because
(Are you listening?)
You see in my outside self I am only a beetle making picayune
Skritch marks on the underside of a pebble
But
Inside I am a bottomless chasm of conceptualizing
And
I tell you that the thoughts oh the thoughts I have are a beach
Ten thousand miles long
But
All I ever will be able to write for you could be represented by
One grain of sand on that beach
And
That is what devastates me
Because
I want to share it all, all, all with you
I want you to swim in the ocean of my inside self
But
All I'll ever be able to put down on paper is to my thoughts no
More than an ant's pee is to a tsunami
(Can you understand?)
That though I'm doing my best for you I'm sick and sorry inside
Myself
Because
I know that if every man and woman and child on this earth had
An instrument to play that hand would not be big enough to play
The song I want to sing to you
And
So you must excuse me if I stare blankly into space when you are
Talking to me or if I ignore you in the street when you greet me
Because
I am not being rude or indifferent
I am only trying to do it for you, my friend(s)
So you see
If I would rather not talk about the weather with you it is
Because
I hear in my raging imagination story sounds that are the composite
To me of every thunder that ever rolled over this poor world
(Are you paying attention?)
And
Though there be no word on my lips there is
A shrieking in the blood
So please try to understand when I say that I've always known that
No man is an island
Because
All who write science-fiction are pocket universes and when you
Ask that question of us we cannot answer because we cannot analyze
A bipedal cosmos.
I have tried to make you see
(Do you see, you happy-poor deprived friends whom I love?)
That I cannot tell you where I get my ideas
Because
They sweep out of the vast void darkness that howls in me like the
Wind above the treeline and try to break through the smooth
Cool granite of my frail humanness and I am sorry, sorry but
There is only a very tiny crack in that wall
Please
Be patient.
Try to grasp what I'm telling you.
I've been as clear and polite as I can
But
To explain where I get my ideas from would be like trying to
Describe the texture of God's epidermis
So
I can only tell you they come
THEY COME, GODDAMMIT, THEY COME, AND THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT!
And
You will nod and say, "Yes, I do understand"
But
I know you don't and never will and never can
So all I can do is sigh and say I've tried my best to explain the
Impossible and might as well have tried to vivisect a quark
Just please don't interrupt me with the question too often
I have mountains to move.



THE METROGNOME

STORY BY
ALAN DEAN FOSTER

ILLUSTRATION BY
T. NESBITT

CHARLIE DIMSDALE STARED AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM. EVEN UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES CHARLIE DIMSDALE WOULD HAVE STARED AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM. HOWEVER, THIS CONFRONTATION WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE LOWEST LEVELS OF THE 52ND STREET-BRONX SUBWAY LINE, A GOOD MANY METERS BENEATH THE HYSTERICAL SURFACE OF MANHATTAN. IT WAS JUST SHORT OF PREORDAINED THAT CHARLIE DIMSDALE WOULD STARE AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM.

THE MAN IN FRONT OF CHARLIE DIMSDALE STOOD SLIGHTLY OVER A **METER HIGH**. HE WAS BROAD OUT OF ALL PROPORTION IN SELECTED PLACES. HIS **HEAD**, ESPECIALLY, WAS EVEN **LARGER** THAN THAT OF A NORMAL-SIZED MAN. ITS MOST NOTABLE FEATURE WAS A **PROBOSCIS** THAT WOULD BE FLATTERED BY THE APPELLATION **BULBOUS**. THIS REMARKABLE PROTUBERANCE WAS BORDERED BY A PAIR OF HUGE **JET-BLACK EYES** THAT HID BENEATH BLACK EYEBROWS A KODIAK BEAR WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF. TWO **ENORMOUS** FLOPPY **EARS**, THE SHAPE AND COLOUR OF DRIED APRICOTS, FLUTTERED SIDEWAYS FROM THE HEAD, THE SPAN A TRULY IMPRESSIVE SIGHT.

THE PATE ITSELF WAS AS BALD AND ROUND AS THE BOTTOM OF A **CHINA TEACUP**. A GOOD PORTION OF IT WAS COVERED BY A JAUNTY **RED BERET**, SET AT A RAKISH ANGLE TO THE LEFT. HUGE BLACK **MUTTONCHOP** WHISKERS RAMBLED LIKE A GIANT CATERPILLAR ACROSS HIS FACE.

ARMS THAT WERE TOO LONG FOR THE SHORT TORSO ENDED IN THICK, STUBBY FINGERS. BLACK HAIR, WELL CULTIVATED, GREW THERE IN PROFUSION. IN ADDITION TO THE BERET, HE WORE A **DOUBLE-BREASTED PINSTRIPE JACKET** WITH MATCHING TROUSERS. HIS **BLACK OXFORDS** WERE IMMACULATELY POLISHED.

HAD SUCH A CONFRONTATION OCCURRED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD WITH AN APPROPRIATE **DIMSDALE-SUBSTITUTE**, IT IS LIKELY THAT SAID DIMSDALE-SUBSTITUTE WOULD HAVE FAINTED QUICKLY AWAY. CHARLIE DIMSDALE, HOWEVER, MERELY GULPED AND TOOK A STEP BACKWARDS.

AFTER ALL, THIS **WAS** NEW YORK.

THE LITTLE MAN PUT HIS HIRSUTE HANDS ON HIS HIPS AND STARED BACK AT CHARLIE WITH UNDISGUISED DISGUST.

"**WELL**, YOU'VE **SEEN** ME. NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO** ABOUT IT?"

"**SEEN** YOU? **DO**? LOOK MISTER, I'M ONLY... MY NAME'S CHARLES DIMSDALE. I'M SECOND ASSISTANT INSPECTOR TO THE THE UNDER-COMMISSIONER FOR SUBWAY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. THERE'S A MISALIGNED TRACK DOWN HERE. WE'VE HAD TO MAKE **THREE CONSECUTIVE COMPUTER REROUTINGS UP TOP** (THIS WAS OFFICIAL SLANG OF COURSE) FOR THREE DIFFERENT TRAINS. I'M TO SEE WHAT THE TROUBLE IS AND TO TRY AND CORRECT IT IS ALL."

CHARLIE WAS A RATHER **PLEASANT** TO **UNSPECTACULAR** APPEARING YOUNG MAN. HE MIGHT EVEN BE CONSIDERED ATTRACTIVE IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIS MOUSEY ATTITUDE AND THOSE **GLASSES**. THEY WEREN'T QUITE THICK ENOUGH TO DOUBLE AS REACTOR SHIELDING.

"UH... DID I JUST SEE YOU WALK OUT OF THAT WALL?"

"**WHICH** WALL?," THE MAN ASKED.

"**THAT** WALL, BEHIND YOU."

"OH, **THAT** WALL?"

"YES, **THAT** WALL. I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS AN INSPECTION DOOR THERE, BUT...."

"THERE ISN'T. I **DID**."

"THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE**," SAID CHARLIE REASONABLY. "PEOPLE DON'T GO AROUND WALKING THROUGH WALLS. IT ISN'T **DONE**. EVEN **MR. BROADHARE** CAN'T WALK THROUGH WALLS."

"I DON'T DOUBT IT."

"THEN HOW CAN YOU STAND THERE AND MAINTAIN YOU WALKED THROUGH THAT WALL?"

"I'M NOT HUMAN. I'M A **GNOME**. A **METRO-GNOME**, TO BE SPECIFIC."

"OH. I GUESS THAT'S OKAY, THEN."

AT THAT POINT, NEW YORKER OR NO, CHARLIE FAINTED.

WHEN HE CAME TO, HE FOUND HIMSELF STARING INTO A PAIR OF SLIGHTLY GLOWING COAL-BLACK EYES. HE ALMOST FAINTED AGAIN, BUT SURPRISINGLY POWERFUL ARMS INSISTED HIM TO HIS FEET.

"NOW DON'T DO THAT TO ME AGAIN," SAID THE GNOME. "IT'S VERY RUDE AND DISCONCERTING. YOU MIGHT HAVE HIT YOUR HEAD ON THE RAIL AND HURT YOURSELF."

"WHAT RAIL?" ASKED CHARLIE GROGGILY.

"**THAT** ONE, THERE, IN THE MIDDLE."

"**ULP!**" CHARLIE TOOK SEVERAL STEPS BACK UNTIL HE WAS STANDING ON THE WALKWAY. "YOU'RE RIGHT. I REALLY COULD'VE HURT MYSELF. I WON'T DO IT AGAIN." HE LOOKED DISAPPROVINGLY AT THE GNOME. "YOU AREN'T HELPING THINGS ANY, YOU KNOW. WHY DON'T YOU **VANISH**? THERE'RE NO SUCH THINGS AS **GNOMES**. EVEN IN **NEW YORK**. **ESPECIALLY** IN NEW YORK."

"**HA!**" GRUNTED THE GNOME. HE SAID IT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO IMPLY THAT AMONG THOSE ASSEMBLED, THERE WAS ONE POSSESSED OF ABOUT AS MANY BRAINS AS A **STALE PRETZEL**. THE BIG, SOFT KIND, WITH PLENTY OF SALT. SOMEONE WAS FULL OF DOUGH. CHARLIE HAD NO TROUBLE ISOLATING HIM.

"LOOK," HE SAID IMPLORINGLY, "YOU SIMPLY CAN'T **BE**!"

"THEN HOW THE DEUCE **AM I**?" THE GNOME STUCK OUT A HAIRY PAW. "LOOK, MY NAME'S **VAN GROOT**."

"CHARMED," SAID CHARLIE, DAZEDLY SHAKING THE PROFFERED PALM.

HERE I AM, HE THOUGHT, THIRTY METERS BELOW THE GROUND IN THE MIDDLE OF MANHATTAN SHAKING HANDS WITH A CHARACTER WHO CLAIMS TO BE OUT OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM NAMED VAN GROOT WHO WEARS BROOKS BROTHERS SUITS.

BUT HE **HAD** SEEN HIM WALK THROUGH THE WALL.

THIS SUGGESTED **TWO** POSSIBILITIES.

ONE, IT WAS **REALLY** HAPPENING AND THERE WERE INDEED SUCH CREATURES AS GNOMES.

TWO, HE'D BEEN BREATHING SUBWAY EXHAUST FUMES TOO LONG AND WAS ONLY OPERATING ON ONE CYLINDER. AT THE MOMENT HE INCLINED TO THE **LATTER** EXPLANATION.

"I KNOW HOW YOU MUST FEEL," SAID VAN GROOT SYMPATHETICALLY. "COME ALONG WITH ME FOR A BIT. THE EXERCISE WILL CLEAR YOUR HEAD. EVEN IF, **DE PUYSTER** KNOWS, THERE'S PROBABLY NOT MUCH IN IT ANYWAY."

"SURE. WHY NOT? **OH, WAIT A MINUTE.** I'VE GOT TO FIND AND CLEAR THAT BLOCKED SWITCH."

"WHICH SWITCH - OVER **15** IT?" THE GNOME INQUIRED.

"AGO. IT'S BEEN JUMPED TO INDICATE A BLOCKED TRACK AND THUS THE COMPUTER AUTOMATICALLY SENDS...."

"I **KNOW.**"

"... SEVERAL ALTERNATE PROGRAMS... YOU **KNOW?**"

"SURE. **I'M** THE ONE WHO SET IT."

"**YOU** RESET IT? YOU CAN'T DO THAT!"

VAN GROOT SAID "HA!" AGAIN AND CHARLIE DECIDED THAT IF NOTHING ELSE HE WAS **NOT** OVERWHELMING THIS CREATURE WITH HIS PRECISION OF THOUGHT.

"OKAY. **WHY** DID YOU MOVE IT?"

"IT WAS INTERFERING WITH THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF OUR MINE CARTS."

"**MINE CARTS!** THERE AREN'T ANY MI....," HE HESITATED. "I SEE. IT WAS INTEFERING WITH YOUR MINE CARTS." VAN GROOT NODDED APPROVINGLY. CHARLIE HAD TO HOP AND SKIP OCCASIONALLY TO KEEP UP WITH THE GNOME'S SHORT BUT BRISK STRIDE.

"UH, WHY COULDN'T YOUR MINE CARTS JUST GO OVER THE SWITCH WHEN IT WAS CORRECTLY SET?"

"**BECAUSE,**" THE GNOME EXPLAINED, AS ONE WOULD TO A CHILD, "THAT WAY, THE METAL KEPT WHISPERING '**BLOCKED, BLOCKED!**' THIS UPSET THE MINERS. THEY WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH METAL AND THEY'RE SENSITIVE TO IT. WITH THE SWITCH THROWN THIS WAY, THE RAILS MURMUR '**OPEN, OPEN**' AND THE BOYS FEEL BETTER."

"BUT THAT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A **SMALL** THING."

"IT IS," SAID VAN GROOT.

"THAT'S NOT VERY POLITE."

"NOW, WHY SHOULD WE BE **POLITE?** DO YOU EVER HEAR ANYONE SAY, 'LET'S TAKE UP A COLLECTION FOR **NEEDY GNOMES.**?' IS THERE A **SAVE THE GNOMES LEAGUE**? OR A SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO GNOMES? WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD OF SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING FOR A GNOME, **ANY** GNOME!" VAN GROOT WAS GETTING EXCITED. HIS EARS FLAPPED AND HIS WHISKERS BRISTLED. "**CANARIES** AND **FRUIT-FLY** RESEARCHERS CAN GET GOVERNMENT MONEY, BUT **US?** ALL WE ASK ARE OUR UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, TO **LIFE, LIBERTY,** PLENTY OF **FIGHTS AND BOOZE!**"

THIS ISN'T GETTING ME ANYWHERE, THOUGHT CHARLIE COGENTLY.

"I ADMIT IT SEEMS INEQUITABLE." VAN GROOT SEEMED TO CALM DOWN A LITTLE. "BUT I'D STILL APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D LET ME SHIFT THE TRACK BACK THE WAY IT BELONGS."

"I **TOLD** YOU, IT WOULD BE INCONVENIENT. YOU HUMANS NEVER LEARN. STILL, YOU SEEM LIKE SUCH A NICE, PLEASANT SORT... FOR A **HUMAN.** PROPERLY DEFERENTIAL, TOO. I MAY CONSIDER IT. JUST **CONSIDER** IT, MIND."

"THAT'S VERY DECENT OF YOU. UH, (HOW DOES ONE MAKE SMALL TALK WITH A GNOME?) ... NICE WEATHER WE'RE HAVING, ISN'T IT?" SOMEONE HAD THROWN A BEER CAN OUT OF A SUBWAY WINDOW. CHARLIE STEPPED DOWN OFF THE WALKWAY TO REMOVE THE CAN FROM THE TRACKS.

"NOT PARTICULARLY."

I THOUGHT ALL YOU PEOPLE LIVED IN **IRELAND** AND PLACES LIKE THAT."

"**IRELAND**, MY MYOPIC FRIEND, IS COLD, WET, RAINY, UNCIVILIZED, AND FULL OF CRAZY AMERICAN **EMIGRÉS**. ABOUT THE ONLY THING YOU CAN MINE THERE IN QUANTITY IS **PEAT**. SPEAKING AS A MINER, LET ME TELL YOU THAT IT'S PRETTY HARD TO TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR PROFESSION WHEN ALL YOU MINE IS PEAT. DID YOU EVER SEE A NECKLACE MADE OF PEAT? A QUEEN'S TIARA? AND IT TAKES A LOUSY FACET. **IRELAND!** THAT'S OUR TRADE, YOU KNOW. WE'RE MOSTLY MINERS AND SMITHS."

"WHY?"

"THAT'S ABOUT THE **STUPIDEST** QUESTION I'VE EVER HEARD."

"SORRY."

"DO YOU THINK WE'D IGNORE A **WHOLE NEW WORLD** AND LEAVE IT TO YOU **HUMANS**? WHEN YOUR NOISY, SLOPPY, RIGHTEOUS ANCESTORS PADDLED ACROSS, **WE** CAME TOO. UNOBTRUSIVELY, OF COURSE. WHY THERE WERE GNOMES WITH **WASHINGTON** AT **VALLEY FORGE!** WITH **JONES** ON THE...!"

"WELL, I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THAT," SAID CHARLIE HASTILY, "BUT I THOUGHT YOU PREFERRED THE COUNTRY LIFE."

"BY AND LARGE, MOST OF US DO. BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. THE WORLD'S BECOMING AN URBAN SOCIETY. WE HAVE TO CHANGE TOO. I'VE GOT RELATIVES UPSTATE YOU WOULDN'T **BELIEVE**. THEY STILL THINK THEY CAN LIVE LIKE IT'S **WASHINGTON IRVING'S DAY. REACTIONARIES.**"

CHARLIE TRIED TO CONCEIVE OF A REACTIONARY GNOME, FAILED.

"AND GOOD GEM MINES ARE GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO FIND OUT IN THE COUNTRY. ALL THE SURFACE ONES ARE BEING TURNED INTO **TOURIST TRAPS**. IT'S HARD ENOUGH TO FIND A DECENT PLACE TO **SLEEP** ANYMORE, WHAT WITH ONE PETROLEUM ENGINEER AFTER ANOTHER DOING SEISMIC DOWSING. ANY **IDIOT** COULD TELL YOU THERE'S NO OIL AT NINETY PER CENT OF THE PLACES THEY TRY. BUT WILL THEY LEARN? **NO!** SO IT'S **BOOM, BOOM, BOOM**, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT. THE SUBWAYS ARE MILD AND CONSISTENT BY CONTRAST."

"**WHOA.** YOU MEAN YOU DO MINING... RIGHT HERE IN **MANHATTAN?**"

"**UNDER** MANHATTAN. OH WE'VE FOUND SOME **EXCELLENT** SPOTS! GO DOWN A LITTLE WAYS AND THE GEM-BEARING ROCK IS PLENTIFUL. CHECK YOUR NEW YORK HISTORY. EXCAVATORS TURN UP FAIR QUALITY STONES. BUT NO ONE BOTHERS TO DIG FURTHER BECAUSE THEIR **GLASS TOMB** OR **PYRAMID** OR WHATEVER IS ON A DEADLINE. TOURMALINE, BERYL, THE QUARTZ GEMS... THEY'VE TURNED UP IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOME PRETTY FAMOUS BUILDINGS. THE **RARER**, MORE **VALUABLE** STUFF IS BURIED **FURTHER DOWN**. EVEN SO, THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING ALMOST DID BECOME A MINE. BUT WE GOT TO THE DRILLER WHO FOUND THE DIAMONDS."

CHARLIE SWALLOWED.

"AND THERE'S PLENTY OF **SCRAP METAL**. WE TURN IT INTO **SCEPTERS** AND THINGS. MOSTLY TO KEEP IN PRACTICE. THERE ISN'T MUCH OF A MARKET FOR **CAST-IRON SCEPTERS**."

"I CAN IMAGINE," SAID CHARLIE SYMPATHETICALLY.

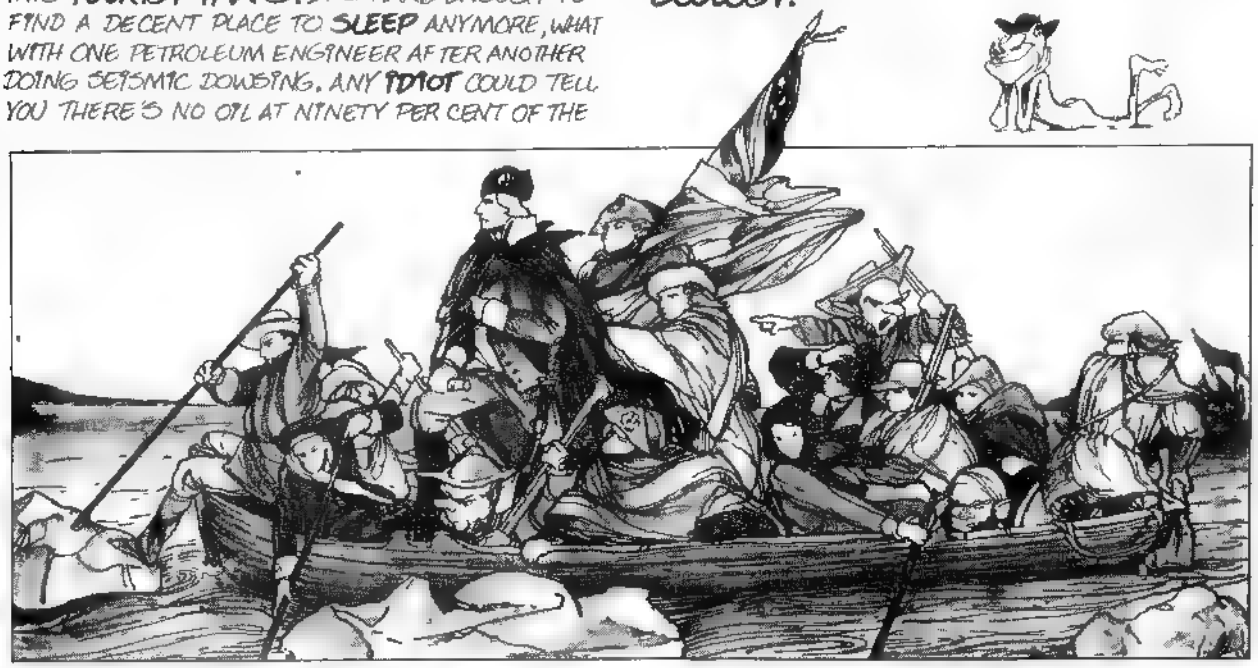
"STILL, YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL NEED A GOOD SCEPTER. OR A PROPER **FLAGAN-PHLANGE**."

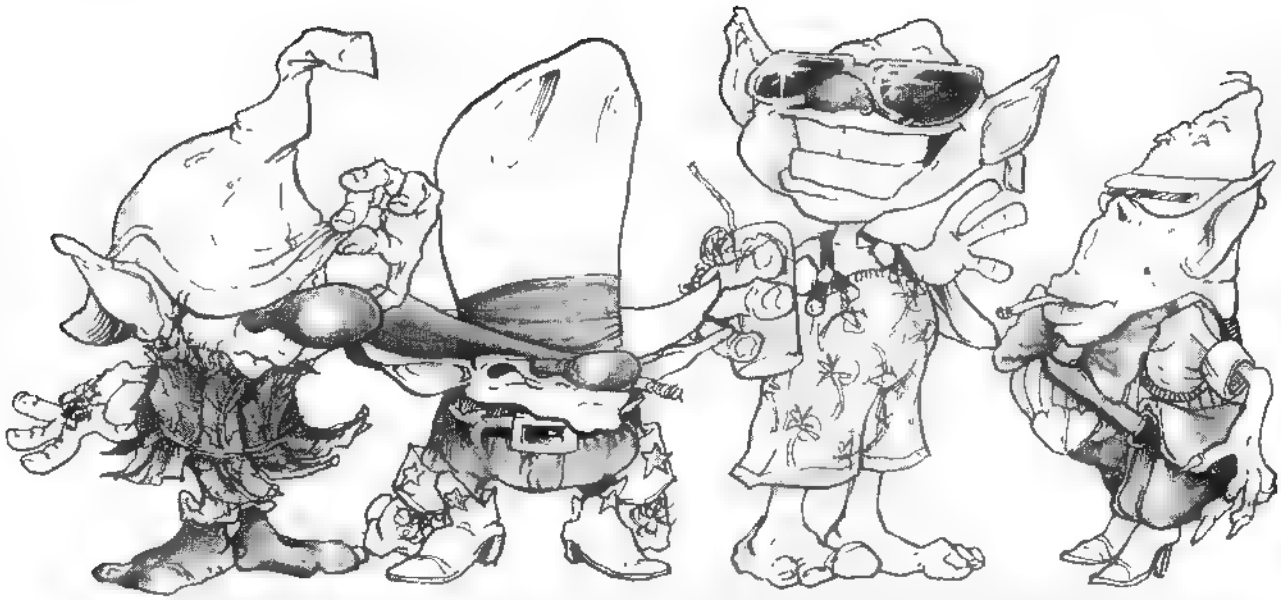
"PARDON MY IGNORANCE..."

"I'VE BEEN DOING THAT FOR HALF AN HOUR."

"... BUT WHAT IS A **FLAGAN-PHLANGE?**"

"OH, THEY'RE USED TO ATTRACT... BUT NEVER MIND. ABOUT THAT SCRAP METAL AND SUCH. WE'RE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT OUR ENVIRONMENT. GNOMES ARE GOOD FOR THE **ECOLOGY**."





"UH." CHARLIE WAS RUNNING A POSSIBLE SCENARIO THROUGH HIS MIND. HE SAW HIMSELF REPORTING TO **UNDERCOMMISSIONER BROADHARE.** "I'VE FIXED THE JAMMED SWITCH SIR. THE GNOMES MOVED IT BECAUSE IT WAS INTERFERING WITH THEIR MINE CARTS. BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO PROSECUTE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE GOOD FOR THE ECOLOGY."

"RIGHT, DIMSDALE. JUST STAND THERE. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT."

OH YEAH.

"BUT I WOULD HAVE IMAGINED...." HE WAVED AN UNCERTAIN HAND AT VAN GROOT," WELL, JUST **LOOK** AT YOURSELF!"

THE GNOME DID." WHAT DID YOU **EXPECT?** **GREEN LEAVES, LEDERHOSEN** AND A **FEATHER CAP?** YOU KNOW, MANHATTAN IS ONE OF THE **FEW** PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE WE CAN OCCASIONALLY SLIP OUT AND MIX WITH HUMANS. WITHOUT STARTING A RIOT. ALWAYS AT **NIGHT,** OF COURSE. ARE YOU **SURE** YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANY OF US? WE'RE VERY COMMON AROUND **TIMES SQUARE** AND THE **THEATRE DISTRICT."**

CHARLIE THOUGHT. BELOW THE FLATIRON BUILDING AT ONE A.M.? ON A BENCH IN WASHINGTON SQUARE? A GLIMPSE HERE, A REFLECTION IN A WINDOW THERE? WHO **WOULD** NOTICE?

AFTER ALL, THIS **WAS** NEW YORK.

"I SEE. DO ALL YOU **CITY** GNOMES...?

"**METRO**GNOMES." CORRECTED VAN GROOT PLACIDLY.

"DO ALL YOU **METRO**GNOMES DRESS LIKE THAT?"

"**SHARP,** ISN'T IT? COST ME A PRETTY PENNY TOO. DOUBLE KNIT, **SPECIAL CUT,** OF COURSE. I CAN'T EXACTLY WEAR SOMETHING RIGHT OFF THE RACK. NO, IT DEPENDS ON YOUR **JOB.** I'M SORT OF AN **ADMINISTRATOR.** AN EXECUTIVE IF YOU WILL. DRESS ALSO DEPENDS ON **WHERE** YOU LIVE. THE GNOMES THAT WORK UNDER **DALLAS** AFFECT **STETSONS** AND **COWBOY BOOTS.** THOSE THAT LIVE UNDER **MIAMI** ARE PARTIAL TO **SUN SHORTS** AND **BIG DARK SUNGLASSES.** AND YOU SHOULD **SEE** THE GNOMES THAT LIVE UNDER A PLACE CALLED THE **SUNSET STRIP** IN **LOS ANGELES!"** HE SHOOK HIS BOSCHIAN BALDNESS." WE'RE HERE."

THEY'D HALTED IN FRONT OF A SWITCHING SECTION OF TRACK. CHARLIE COULD SEE THE RED WARNING LIGHT STARING STEADILY UP-TUNNEL, A BALEFUL BLOODY EYE.

THE SILENCE WAS PUNCTUATED ABRUPTLY BY A LOW-PITCHED RUMBLING, LIKE THUNDER. IT GREW STEADILY TO A GROUND-SHAKING **ROAR.**

CLUNKY, HUGE, OLD FASHIONED MINE CART, BUILT TO HALF SCALE, CAME EXPLODING OUT OF THE PAR WALL. TWO GNOMES WERE PUSHING IT FROM BEHIND WHILE ANOTHER PULLED AND GUIDED THE FRONT. THE LEAD GNOME HAD **PURE WHITE HAIR** AND A **THREE-FOOT BEARD** THAT TRAILED BEHIND HIM LIKE A PENNANT.

THE CART CAREENED CRAZILY DOWN AND OVER THE TRACKS, THREATENING TO OVERTURN EVERYTIME IT HIT THE GROUND. SOMEHOW IT SEEMED TO FLOW OVER THE RAILS. THE THREE GNOMES WORE **DIRTY COVERALLS** AND **MINERS' HARD HATS** WITH **CARBIDE LAMPS**. THE CART WAS PILED HIGH WITH GLEAMING, UNCUT GEMSTONES AND WHAT LOOKED LIKE AN ARCHAIC **WASHER-DRYER**. THE LEAD GNOME HAD JUST ENOUGH TIME FOR A FAST WAVE TO THEM BEFORE THE APPARITION DISAPPEARED INTO THE NEAR WALL. THE RUMBLE DIED AWAY SLOWLY. IT REMINDED CHARLIE OF THE SOUND HIS GARBAGE DISPOSAL MADE WHEN IT WANTED TO BE PETULANT.

"WELL, WHAT ARE YOU **WAITING** FOR? SWITCH IT BACK."

"**WHAT?**" SAID CHARLIE DAZEDLY. "YOU MEAN, **I CAN?**"

"YES. NOW HURRY UP, BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND."

CHARLIE STUMBLED OVER AND PULLED THE MANUAL SWITCH. THE HEAVY SECTION OF TRACK SLID PONDEROUSLY INTO PLACE AND THE WARNING LIGHT CHANGED TO A **BENEFICENT LEAFY GREEN**. IT WOULD SHOW GREEN NOW ON THE MASTER LAYOUT IN THE CONTROLLER'S OFFICE.

"**NOW!**" SAID VAN GROOT WITH ENOUGH FORCE TO STARTLE CHARLIE, "YOU OWE **ME** A FAVOUR!"

"YEAH. SURE. UH... WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?," SAID CHARLIE APPREHENSIVELY, CALLING UP IMAGES OF BLOOD-SUCKING AND DEVIL SACRIFICE.

"I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU THAT THINGS HAVE BEEN GETTING RATHER **EDGY** DOWN HERE. WHAT WITH ONE SKYSCRAPER AFTER ANOTHER GOING UP. AND **NOW** YOU'RE EXPANDING THE SUBWAY AGAIN. I CAN'T PROMISE **WHAT** MIGHT HAPPEN. ONE OF THESE DAYS, SOMEONE'S GOING TO DRIVE A SHAFT RIGHT DOWN INTO ONE OF OUR DIGGINGS AND WE'LL HAVE **ANOTHER STRIKE** ON OUR HANDS."

"HAPPEN? STRIKE?"

"BOY, YOU SURE ARE **ELOQUENT** WHEN YOU GET HUMMING. SURE. GNOMES AREN'T KNOWN FOR THEIR EVEN TEMPERS, YOU KNOW. WHEN GNOMES GO ON STRIKE, THEY'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO BUT **CAUSE MISCHIEF**. THE LAST ONE WE HAD WAS BACK IN...." HE MURMURED A DATE THAT MOMENTARILY HAD NO MEANING TO CHARLIE.

THEN, "**HEY.** WASN'T THAT THE WEEK OF THE **BIG BLACKOUT**, ACROSS THE NORTHEAST?"

"WELL, YOU KNOW HOW STRIKES SPREAD. THE BOYS UNDER **PITTSBURGH** AND **BOSTON** GOT TOGETHER WITH SOME POWER PLANT GNOMES AND.... IT WAS A **TERRIBLE MESS!** MOST AWKWARD!"

"**AWKWARD!** GOOD GRIEF, ANOTHER FEW DAYS OF THAT AND...."

VAN GROOT NODDED SOBERLY, "**EXACTLY.** SOME OF US FINALLY APPEALED TO THE BOYS' REASON, MORAL FIBRE, AND GOOD NATURE. WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK, WE GOT MOST OF 'EM DEAD DRUNK AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPAIRED A LOT OF THE DAMAGE."

"NO WONDER THE ENGINEERS COULD NEVER FIGURE OUT WHAT CAUSED IT."

"OH, THEY MADE UP **EXCUSES**. DIDN'T STOP THEM FROM TAKING CREDIT FOR FIXING THE TROUBLE," SAID VAN GROOT. "BUT THEN, WHO EXPECTS GRATITUDE FROM **HUMANS?**"

"YOU EXPECT SOMETHING LIKE THAT MIGHT HAPPEN AGAIN? THAT WOULD BE **AWFUL!**"

THE GNOME SHRUGGED. "THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW."

HE FLICKED AWAY HIS CIGAR ASH DAINTILY. "AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT SO HAPPENS THAT THIS NEW ADDITION TO YOUR SYSTEM...."

"IT'S NOT **MY** SYSTEM!"

"YES. ANYHOW, WE'VE GOT A PRETTY NICE **CRYSOBERYL** AND **EMERALD** MINE..."

"**EMERALD** MINE!"

"....RIGHT UNDER THE INTERSECTION OF **6**TH AVENUE AND **16**TH STREET. THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?"

"WHY NO, I... NO, WAIT A MINUTE. THAT'S WHERE...." HE GOGGLED AT VAN GROOT.

"YEP. THE NEW **BRONX-MANHATTAN** TUNNEL IS GOING THROUGH JUST SOUTH OF THERE. **THAT'S** NOT THE PROBLEM. IT'S THE NEW EXPRESS STATION THAT'S SET TO GO IN...."

"...RIGHT OVER YOUR MINE," WHISPERED CHARLIE.

"THE BOYS ARE **PRETTY UPSET** ABOUT IT. THEY READ THE **TYMES**. IT'S A PRETTY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION, DYMSDALE. **EXPLOSIVE**." HE LOOKED HARD AT CHARLIE.

"BUT WHAT DO YOU EXPECT **ME** TO DO? I'M ONLY SECOND ASSISTANT INSPECTOR TO THE UNDERCOMMISIONER FOR SUBWAY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. I HAVEN'T GOT THE **POWER** TO ORDER CHANGES IN THINGS LIKE STATION LOCATIONS AND ROUTINGS AND STUFF!"

"THAT'S NOT **MY** PROBLEM," SAID VAN GROOT.

"BUT THEY'RE SCHEDULED TO START BLASTING FOR THAT STATION... MY GOD, **THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!**"

"THAT'S WHAT I HEAR," VAN GROOT SIGHED, "TOO BAD, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN THIS TIME. THERE'S BEEN TALK OF GETTING TOGETHER WITH THE **VERMONT** AND **NEW HAMPSHIRE** GNOMES. THEY WANT TO POUR MAPLE SYRUP INTO THE TELEPHONE CABLES AND SWITCHES BETWEEN **GREAT NECK** AND **OTTAWA**. A STICKY SITUATION, I CAN TELL YOU!"

"BUT YOU CAN'T...!" VAN GROOT LOOKED AT CHARLIE AS THOUGH HE WERE EXAMINING A SPECIAL SPECIES OF EARTHWORM.

"YES YOU CAN."

"THAT'S BETTER." SAID VAN GROOT. "I'LL DO WHAT I CAN. BUT WHILE I DISAGREE WITH THE BOYS' METHODS, I SYMPATHIZE WITH THEIR SENTIMENTS. THEY TOOK AN EMERALD OUT OF THERE ONCE THAT WAS...." HE PAUSED. "BEST I CAN GIVE YOU IS ABOUT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. NO LATER THAN TWELVE O'CLOCK TOMORROW NIGHT."

"WHY TWELVE?," ASKED CHARLIE INANELY.

"IT'S TRADITIONAL. IF YOU'VE MANAGED TO HELP ANY, I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE. IF NOT, GO SOAK YOUR HEAD."

"LOOK, I TOLD YOU, I'M ONLY A SECOND ASSISTANT TO...."

"I REMEMBER. I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR FAILINGS. **YOUR** PROBLEM."

"TOMORROW'S SATURDAY. ON SUNDAYS I ALWAYS CALL MY MOTHER IN GREENVILLE. IF YOU GUM UP THE TELEPHONE LINES I WON'T BE ABLE TO."

"AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GENERAL COMPUTERS, WHO USUALLY CALLS HIS MISTRESS IN GENEVA ON SUNDAY MORNINGS, WON'T BE ABLE TO, EITHER." SAID VAN GROOT. "IT'LL BE A VERY DEMOCRATIC CRISIS. REMEMBER, **MIDNIGHT TOMORROW.**"

PUFFING NIGHTILY ON THE CIGAR AND IGNORING CHARLIE'S ENTREATIES, THE GNOME EXECUTIVE DISAPPEARED INTO THE NEAR WALL OF THE TUNNEL.

THE MORNING WAS COOL AND CLEAR. ON SATURDAY MORNINGS, CHARLIE USUALLY WENT FIRST TO THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY. THEN OFF TO THE GUGGENHEIM TO SEE IF ANYTHING NEW HAD COME IN DURING THE WEEK. FROM THERE IT WAS DOWN TO THE VILLAGE FOR A QUICK TOUR THROUGH HEIMACKER'S ACRES OF BOOKS BOOKSTORE. THEN HOME, WHERE HE WOULD TREAT HIMSELF TO A EXTENSIVE TV DINNER INSTEAD OF THE USUAL FRIED CHICKEN OR SWISS STEAK. OUT TO A FILM OR CONCERT AND THEN HOME.

TODAY, HOWEVER, HIS SCHEDULE WAS MARKEDLY ALTERED. HE WENT TO THE MUSEUM ON TIME. THE USUAL THRILL WASN'T THERE. EVEN THE EXHIBITS OF NORTHWESTERN INDIAN DUGOUTS DIDN'T EXCITE HIM AS THEY USUALLY DID. INSTEAD OF ENVISIONING HIMSELF PERCHED IN THE BOW, HARPOON POISED FOR THE WHALE KILL, HE SAW HIMSELF CROUCHED IN THE REAR, PADDLING FURIOUSLY TO ESCAPE THE HORDES OF ANGRY **GNOMES** THAT WERE CHASING HIM IN BARK CANOES. AND WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE ALWAYS PAROSING SKELETON OF THE **TYRANNOSAURUS REX** AND SAW **UNDER-COMMISSIONER BROADHARE'S SOUR PUSS** IN THE GRINNING SKULL, HE DECIDED IT WAS DEFINITELY TIME TO DEPART.

HE MADE UP A SPEECH. HE'D WALK STRAIGHT INTO **COMMISSIONER FEELY'S** OFFICE, POWERFUL AND INSISTENT, AND SAY, "LOOK HERE FEELY. YOU'VE GOT TO SHIFT THE NEW SIXTH AVENUE STATION FROM THE NORTH TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TRACKS BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T THE GNOMES WILL DESTROY OUR GREAT TELEPHONE NETWORK WITH **MAPLE SYRUP** AND....!"

CHARLIE MOANED.

HE WAS STILL MOANING WHEN HE STUMBLED OUT OF THE MUSEUM. THE STONE LIONS WHO GUARDED THE PORTALS WATCHED HIM GO. HE HEADED FOR THE GUGGENHEIM OUT OF HABIT BUT FOUND HIMSELF INSTEAD WANDERING AIMLESSLY THROUGH **CENTRAL PARK.**

LET'S SEE. HE COULD SNEAK INTO THE PLANNING OFFICE AND BURN THE STATION BLUEPRINTS. **NO**, THAT WOULDN'T DO. THEY WERE BOUND TO HAVE **PLENTY** OF COPIES. CHARLIE HAD TO FILL OUT **THREE COPIES** OF A FORM HIMSELF JUST TO REQUISITION A BOX OF **PAPER CLIPS**

HE COULD SNEAK INTO THE STATION SITE AND TRY AND SABOTAGE THE CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. THAT WOULD DELAY THINGS FOR A WHILE. EXCEPT HE DIDN'T THINK HE KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT THE MACHINERY TO SUCCESSFULLY BUST **ANY** OF IT. HE'D **NEVER** BEEN VERY MECHANICALLY INCLINED. IN FACT HE'D **FAILED HANDICRAFTS MISERABLY** IN HIGH SCHOOL.

HOW ABOUT USING THE SITE TO STAGE A **RALLY FOR THE ADMISSION OF NATIONALIST CHINA TO THE U.N.?** THAT WAS ALWAYS **SURE** TO DRAW A NOISY, RAMBUNCTIOUS CROWD. THEY MIGHT EVEN SABOTAGE THE SIGHT **THEMSELVES!** HE KNEW A FRIEND WHO WAS FAINTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE **JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY** WHO MIGHT... **NO THAT WOULDN'T WORK** RIGHTIST RADICALS WOULD **HARDLY** BE THE GROUP TO GET TO TRY AND HALT THE CONSTRUCTION OF **ANYTHING**

BESIDES, THEY WERE ALL ONLY **TEMPORARY. DELAYING TACTICS.** ALSO, HE COULD GO TO JAIL FOR ANY ONE OF THEM. A PROSPECT WHICH ENTHRALLED HIM EVEN LESS THAN MISSING HIS REGULAR SUNDAY CALL TO HIS MOTHER IN GREENVILLE.

DINNERTIME ROLLED AROUND AND HE **STILL** HADN'T THOUGHT OF ANY THING. HE WAS REMINDED OF THE REAL WORLD BY THE SMELL OF INCINERATING VEAL CORDON BLEU. THE DELICATELY CARBONIZED ODOR PERMEATED HIS TINY LIVING ROOM. THE UNAPPETIZING RESULT IN HIS STOVE WAS NOT CALCULATED TO IMPROVE HIS HUMOUR, ALREADY BUMPING ALONG AT A SEASONABLY **LOW EBB.**

WHAT HE DID WAS **MOST UNUSUAL.** FOR CHARLIE IT WAS **UNIQUE.** HE DUG DUG DOWN, DEEP, DEEP, DEEP, INTO THE BOWELS OF HIS CUPBOARDS, PAST COUNTLESS CANS OF MR. PLANTER'S PEANUTS, DOWN PAST AN IMMACULATE COCKTAIL SHAKER, NEVER USED SINCE ITS PURCHASE THREE YEARS AGO, DOWN PAST THINGS BETTER LEFT UNMENTIONED, UNTIL HE FOUND A **HAIR OF THE DOG.**

NEVER MORE THAN A **SOCIAL DRINKER** (MOSTLY AT OFFICIAL COMPANY FUNCTIONS), CHARLIE THOUGHT A FEW SIPS MIGHT SHARPEN HIS THOUGHTS. IT SEEMED TO WORK FOR OLD AGENT X-4 REGULARLY EVERY FRIDAY EVENING ON CHANNEL 3. SO HE SIPPED **DELICATELY** AND **CAREFULLY.** FOR VARIETY, HE ALTERNATED BOTTLES, THEY WERE **FRIENDLY DOGS INDEED.** WARM AND CUDDLY, LIKE A MALTESE. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEY WERE RATHER MORE LIKE A COUPLE OF PLAYFUL **ST. BERNARDS.** AND VERY SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEREAFTER, HE WAS IN NO CONDITION TO ASPIRE TO ANY ANALOGIES AT ALL.

ACTUALLY HE HADN'T **INTENDED** TO GET DRUNK. IT WAS, HOWEVER, AN INESCAPABLE BY-PRODUCT OF HIS DRINKING. HE RAN OUT OF SIPPABLES IN WHAT SEEMED INDECENTLY SHORT ORDER.

HE THREW ON HIS RAINCOAT... IT WASN'T RAINING, BUT YOU NEVER KNEW, HE THOUGHT BELLIGERENTLY ...AND HEADED IN SEARCH OF MORE **FOLLICLES OF THE POOCH.** IT WAS SHEER GOOD FORTUNE HE DIDN'T START FOR THE **POUND.**

ON THE WAY, HE HAD THE FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE TO ENCOUNTER **MISS OVERSHADE** IN THE HALLWAY. MISS OVERSHADE OCCUPIED THE APARTMENT ACROSS THE HALL FROM CHARLIE, ON THE **GOOD** SIDE OF THE BUILDING. SHE WAS A LOCAL PERSONALITY OF SOME NOTE, BEING THE **WEATHER LADY** ON THE EARLY NEWS ON CHANNEL 8. SHE HAD AT ONE TIME BEEN VOTED '**MISS CONTINENTAL SHELF**' BY THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY AND CURRENTLY HELD THE TITLE '**MISS HIGH PRESSURE AREA**' FROM THE NEW YORK COUNCIL OF METEOROLOGISTS.

IN POINT OF FACT, SHE ACTUALLY **WAS** CONSTRUCTED RATHER ALONG THE LINES OF AN ESPECIALLY ESTHETIC GATHERING OF **CUMULUS CLOUDS.** SHE NOTICED CHARLIE, SORT OF.

"GOOD EVENING, MISTER... UH, MISTER..."

"DIMSDALE," MUMBLED CHARLIE. "DIMSDALE."

"OH YES! HOW ARE YOU, MISTER DIMSDALE!" WITHOUT PAUSING TO LEARN IF HE WAS ON THE BRINK OF A HORRIBLE DEATH, SHE VANISHED INTO HER APARTMENT. THAT VOICE WAS CALCULATED TO BRING ON THE MONSOON. FOR ALL **SHE** CARES, HE THOUGHT, I MIGHT AS WELL BE A... A **GNOME.**

HE HURRIED DOWN THE STAIRS, INSULTING THE ELEVATOR.

AT SEVEN SHARP, CHARLIE WAS PERUSING THE SOLUBLE DELIGHTS OF AN AGED AND NOT-SO-VENERABLE ESTABLISHMENT KNOWN AS **BIG SWACK'S BAR.** CURRENTLY, HE EXISTED IN A STATE OF BLISSFUL INEBRIATION THAT FOLLOWED A THIN PATH BETWIXT **NIRVANA** AND **HELL.** FOR THE NONCE **NIRVANA** PREVAILED.

CHARLIE HAD A THOUGHT, GRAPPLED WITH IT. IT WAS BROUGHT ON BY SOMETHING **YIN GREET** HAD SAID. HE LOOKED AT IT HARD, PIERCINGLY, TURNING IT OVER IN HIS MIND AND SEARCHING FOR CRACKS. IT SQUIRMED TRYING TO GET AWAY. HE WAS CAREFUL, BECAUSE HE'D SEEN **OTHER** THINGS TONIGHT WHICH HADN'T BEEN AT ALL REAL. **THIS** THOUGHT HOWEVER, **WAS.**

HE LEFT SO FAST HE FORGOT TO COLLECT THE CHANGE FROM HIS LAST DRINK. AN OCCASION WHICH SO **ASTONISHED** THE PROPRIETOR, **BIG SWACK** (WHOSE REAL NAME WAS **HOCHMEISTER**), THAT HE TALKED OF NOTHING ELSE FOR DAYS AFTERWARDS.

ONSON, JONSON! BILL JONSON!" CHARLIE HAMMERED UNMELODIOUSLY ON THE DOOR.

BILL JONSON WAS A SANDY-HAIRED, RATHER SANDY-FACED YOUNG GEOLOGIST WHO OCCASIONALLY SHARED WITH CHARLIE A PALLID SANDWICH IN THE EQUALLY PALLID SUBWAY AUTHORITY CAFETERIA. HE DID NOT NEED MINUTES TO OBSERVE THAT HIS FRIEND WAS **NOT** HIS USUAL BLAND SELF.

"CHARLIE? WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?"

NOW CHARLIE WAS SOMEWHAT COHERENT BECAUSE ON THE WAY UP TO HIS FRIEND'S ABODE HE'D HAD ENOUGH SENSE TO INGEST **THREE SOBER-UPS**. THESE WERE CHASED DOWNSTREAM CONSECUTIVELY BY WATER, HALF A PEPSI, AND AN ORANGE DRINK OF SUFFICIENT SWEETNESS TO DESTROY **ANY** SELF-RESPECTING MOLAR INSIDE OF A MONTH. AS A RESULT HIS MIND CLEARED AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS STOMACH, WHICH WAS STARTING TO CLOUD OVER.

"**LISTEN**, BILL! CAN YOU TAKE A ... A **SOUNDING**, A READING, A ... **YOU KNOW**. TO DETERMINE IF THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THE GROUND? LIKE A **BIG HOLLOW PLACE?**"

"I SUSPECT A BIG HOLLOW PLACE AND IT'S **NOT** IN THE GROUND. COME BACK TOMORROW MAYBE, CHARLIE, HUH? I'VE GOT COMPANY, YOU KNOW?" HE SORT OF TRIED A HALF-GRIN, HALF BLINK. IT MADE HIM LOOK LIKE A MAN SUFFERING FROM AN ATTACK OF THE GALLOPING GRIPES.

"BILL, YOU'VE **GOT** TO TAKE THIS SOUDING! YOU **CAN** TAKE ONE? I'VE HEARD YOU MENTION IT BEFORE. PAY ATTENT! ... **HIC!** ... MAN! THIS IS IMPORTANT! THINK OF THE TELEPHONE COMPANY!"

"I'D RATHER NOT. I GOT MY BILL TWO DAYS AGO. NOW BE A GOOD CHAP, CHARLIE, AND RUN ALONG. IT CAN WAIT TILL MONDAY. AND I **HAVE** GOT COMPANY."

CHARLIE WAS DESPERATE. "JUST ANSWER ME. CAN YOU TAKE A SOUNDING?"

"YOU MEAN TEST THE **SUBSTRATA**, LIKE I DO FOR THE SUBWAY AUTHORITY?"

"**YEAH! THAT!**" CHARLIE DANCED AROUND EXCITEDLY. THIS DID NOT INSPIRE BILL TO LOOK ON HIS FRIEND WITH FAVOR.

"YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ONE FOR ME!"

"A **READING?** YOU'RE DRUNK!"

"CERTAINLY **NOT**!"

"THEN WHY ARE YOU LEANING TO THE LEFT LIKE THAT?"

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LIBERAL. LISTEN, YOU KNOW THE NEW STATION THEY'RE PLANNING TO BUILD FOR THE EXTENDED BRONX-MANHATTAN LINE? THE ONE AT 6TH AND 16TH?"

"I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT. THAT'S MORE **YOUR** DEPARTMENT THAN MINE, YOU KNOW."

"INDIRECTLY. YOU'VE GOT TO COME DOWN AND TAKE A READING THERE. NOW, **TONIGHT!** I'VE REASON TO SUSPECT THAT THE GROUND THERE IS UNSTABLE."

"YOU ARE **CRAZY**. THERE'S NO REAL UNSTABLE GROUND IN MANHATTAN, UNLESS YOU COUNT SOME OF THE BARS IN THE VILLAGE. IT'S PRACTICALLY SOLID GRANITE. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS ANYWAY?" HE LOOKED POINTEDLY AT HIS WATCH. "MY GOD, IT'S NEARLY 8:30!"

THIS UNSUBTLE HINT DID NOT HAVE THE INTENDED EFFECT ON CHARLIE.

"MY GOD," HE ECHOED, LOOKING IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF HIS OWN TIMEPIECE, "IT'S NEARLY 8:30! WE'VE GOT TO HURRY! WE'VE ONLY GOT 'TIL TWELVE!"

"I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'VE GOT EVEN LESS THAN THAT." SAID BILL.

"WHO DOES?," CAME A MELLIFLUOUS VOICE FROM BEHIND THE DOOR.

"WHO'S **THAT**?," CHARLIE ASKED, TRYING TO PEER OVER HIS FRIEND'S SHOULDER.

"THE TELEVISION. NOW LOOK, GO ON HOME AND I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU ASK... MONDAY, HUH? **PLEASE**?"

"**NONSENSE, BILL.**" SAID THE VOICE. THE DOOR OPENED WIDER. A YOUNG LADY IN RATHER TIGHT SLACKS AND SWEATER CAME INTO VIEW BEHIND BILL. "WHY DON'T YOU INVITE YOUR FRIEND IN? **CHARLIE**, WASN'T IT?"

"STILL IS," SAID CHARLIE.

"I CAN'T THINK OF A **SINGLE** REASON," SAID BILL IN A TONE THAT WOULD SUFFICE TO TAN LEATHER. HE OPENED THE DOOR WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE AND CHARLIE SLIPPED INSIDE.

"HI. MY NAME'S **ABIGAIL**." THE GIRL CHIRRED.

"ABIGAIL?" SAID CHARLIE IN DISBELIEF.

"ABIGAIL," REPLIED BILL NODDING SLOWLY.

"MY NAME'S CHARLIE." SAID CHARLIE.

"I KNOW."

"YOU DO? HAVE WE MET BEFORE?"

"GET TO THE POINT," SAID BILL.

"ABIGAIL, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME. I MUST ENLIST BILL'S INEXHAUSTIBLE FOUNT OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE. IN AN ENTERPRISE THAT IS **VITAL** TO THE SAFETY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK!" ABIGAIL'S EYES WENT WIDE. BILL'S GOT HARD, LIKE DUM DUM BULLETS.

"I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE," CHARLIE CONTINUED CONSPIRATORIALLY, "THAT THE GROUND AT 6TH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET IS UNSTABLE. IF THIS IS NOT PROVEN TONIGHT LIVES WILL BE ENDANGERED! BUT I MUST BUTTRESS MY THEORY WITH FACT."

"DON'T **SWEAR**. GEE, THAT'S FANTASTIC! ISN'T THAT **FANTASTIC**, BILL?"

"IT SURE IS," BILL REPLIED. IN A MINUTE HE WOULD FANTASIZE HER FURTHER BY STRANGLING HIS OWN FRIEND RIGHT BEFORE HER FANTASIZED EYES.

CHARLIE BEGAN TO PROWL AROUND THE LIVING ROOM, HIS OWN OCULARS DARTING RIGHT TO LEFT. "WELL, DON'T JUST **STAND** THERE, BILL! WE'VE GOT TO ASSEMBLE YOUR EQUIPMENT. **NOW**. DON'T YOU AGREE, ABIGAIL?"

"OH **YES**. **HURRY** BILL, LET'S **DO**!"

"YES." MURMURED BILL TIGHTLY. "JUST LET ME GET MY **HAT** AND **COAT**." HE TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AT HIS FRIEND. "IS IT RAINING OUT?"

CHARLIE WAS ON HANDS AND KNEES, PEERING UNDER THE COUCH. "**RAINING** OUT? DON'T BE **ABSURD**! OF **COURSE** IT ISN'T RAINING OUT! WHAT MAKES YOU THINK IT'S RAINING OUT?"

"NOTHING," SAID BILL. "I CAN'T IMAGINE WHERE I GOT THE IDEA."

SIXTH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET WAS NOT A VERY BUSY INTERSECTION, EVEN LATE ON A SATURDAY NIGHT. ESPECIALLY SINCE IT HAD BEEN BLOCKED OFF IN SPOTS BY THE CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WASN'T EXACTLY A **DARK ALLEY**, EITHER. THE WINOS, COMFORTABLY TUCKED INTO THEIR CORNERS, WERE NO PROBLEM. BUT THERE WERE ENOUGH PEDESTRIANS ABOUT TO MAKE BILL FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE AND CONSPICUOUS, WITH HIS HEAVY FIELD CASE.

"WHY CAN'T WE GO IN THERE?," HE ASKED, POINTING TO AN ASSEMBLAGE OF HEAVY EARTH MOVERS.

"BECAUSE THE CONSTRUCTION AREA IS PROTECTED BY A THREE-METER HIGH WIRE FENCE TOPPED WITH THREE ROWS OF BARBED WIRE WITH TRIPLE ALARMS ON THE GATES AND IS PATROLLED BY VICIOUS LARGE-FANGED GUARD DOGS, IS WHY."

"OH," SAID BILL.

"CAN'T YOU DO WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO DO RIGHT **HERE**?," ASKED ABIGAIL.

"YEAH, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SET OFF A VERY BIG EXPLOSION, ARE YOU?," CHARLIE BLURTED.

IT IS TRUE THAT CHARLIE WAS **STILL** FAIRLY INTELLIGIBLE. BUT THE EFFECTS OF THE **SOBER-UP** WERE WEARING OFF AND HE TENDED TO TALK RATHER **LOUDER** THAN NORMAL.

SO THE WORD "**EXPLOSION**" DID HAVE THE USEFUL EFFECT OF SENDING SEVERAL COUPLES SCURRYING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET AND CLEARING A BROAD SPACE AROUND THEM.

"FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!," WHISPERED BILL, "WILL YOU **SHUT UP** ABOUT **EXPLOSIONS**! YOU WANT TO GET US **ARRESTED**?" HE TURNED TO SURVEY THE WOODEN FENCE THAT CLOSED OFF THE VACANT LOT BEHIND THEM. "THERE'S BOUND TO BE A LOOSE BOARD OR A GATE IN THIS FENCE. ALL I'M GOING TO DO INSIDE IS SET OFF THE SMALLEST CAP I'VE GOT. YOU'LL GET THE BRIEFEST READING I CAN AND **THAT'S IT!**"

WHILE BILL AND CHARLIE SCREENED HER FROM THE STREET, ABIGAIL SLIPPED UNDER THE HINGED PLANK THEY'D FOUND. CHARLIE FOLLOWED AND BILL CAME AFTER, AFTER SLIPPING THROUGH HIS FIELD KIT. THEY STOOD ALONE IN IN THE EMPTY LOT.

"OOOO, ISN'T THIS **EXCITING**?!," ABIGAIL WHISPERED.

"ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING NIGHTS OF MY LIFE," GROWLED BILL. HE'D LONG SINCE RESIGNED HIMSELF TO THE FACT THAT THE ONLY WAY HE WAS GOING TO GET RID OF HIS FRIEND, SHORT OF **HOMICIDE**, WAS TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS IDIOCY.

"ONLY LET'S BE READY TO GET OUT OF HERE QUICK, HUH? I DON'T FEEL LIKE TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO ANY OF NEW YORK'S FINEST WHAT I'M DOING TAKING SEISMIC READINGS IN A VACANT LOT AT 9 O'CLOCK SATURDAY NIGHT."

"IS IT THAT LATE **ALREADY**?," YELLED CHARLIE, OBLIVIOUS TO HIS FRIENDS ATTEMPTS TO SHUSH HIM. "**HURRY, HURRY!**"

"ANYTHING, IF YOU'LL ONLY **SHUT UP!**" BILL MOANED NERVOUSLY. THE OTHERS WATCHED WHILE HE PROCEEDED TO DIG A SMALL HOLE WITH A COLLAPSIBLE SPADE. HE PUT SOMETHING FROM HIS CASE INTO IT, THEN FILLED IN THE DIRT, TAMPING IT DOWN TIGHTLY WITH THE FLAT OF THE SPADE. HE WALKED BACK TO THEM, TRAILING TWO THIN WIRES.

"THIS IS EXCITING!," SAID ABIGAIL. BILL GAVE HER A PAINED LOOK WHILE CHARLIE FAIRLY **HOPPED** WITH IMPATIENCE.

BILL HIT THE SMALL PUSHBUTTON DEVICE THE WIRES LED FROM. THERE WAS A MUFFLED THUMP! CLODS OF EARTH WERE THROWN SEVERAL METERS INTO THE TEPID AIR OF THE NEW YORK NIGHT. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY A NON-ORGANIC SHOE AND SEVERAL LONG-EMPTY TUNA-FISH CANS.

"WELL?," SAID CHARLIE. HE SAID IT SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE HE REALIZED BILL COULDN'T HEAR HIM THROUGH THE EARPHONES. FINALLY HE TAPPED HIM ON THE SHOULDER. "HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?"

"TOO LONG," SAID BILL, MOONING AT ABIGAIL, WHO WAS INSPECTING THE MIDGET CRATER. "IT'S A VERY SMALL BANG. I'VE GOT TO AMPLIFY & RE-AMPLIFY THE RESULTS AND WAIT FOR A PROPER PRINT-OUT FROM THE COMPUTER. MAYBE AN HOUR, MAYBE TWO."

"THAT IS TOO LONG!" CHARLIE WHIMPERED PITEOUSLY.

"THAT IS-TOO-BAD!" BILL WAS JUST ABOUT AT THE END OF HIS GOOD HUMOR.

"WELL, OKAY, BUT HURRY IT UP, WILL YOU?" BILL CHEWED AIR AND DIDN'T REPLY.

"I DON'T BELIEVE IT!" THERE WAS A PECULIAR EXPRESSION ON THE YOUNG GEOLOGIST'S FACE.

"WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S HAPPENED?," SAID ABIGAIL. BILL TURNED SLOWLY FROM HIS INSTRUMENTS, LOOKED UP AT CHARLIE.

"YOU WERE RIGHT. SON OF A BITCH, YOU WERE RIGHT! I DON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT... UNSTABLE! GEEZ, THERE'S A REGULAR CAVE DOWN THERE!"

"WILL IT AFFECT THE TUNNEL?"

"NO, NOT THE LINE, BUT AS FOR PUTTING A STATION DOWN THERE... THE WHOLE THING COULD COLLAPSE UNDER SECTIONS OF THE BLOCK. AND I COULDN'T BEGIN TO PREDICT WHAT BLASTING HERE MIGHT DO. I DON'T THINK ANYONE WOULD GET HURT, BUT THE ADDED EXPENSE... TO INSURE THE SAFETY OF THE CRANE OPERATORS AND SUCH..."

"NOW THAT WOULD BE SERIOUS," SAID CHARLIE. "HEY, WHAT TIME IS IT?"

"BOUT TWENTY TO TWELVE," BILL REPLIED GLANCING DOWN AT HIS WATCH.

CHARLIE LOOKED ASKANCE AT HIS WATCH. "HEAVENS, IT'S TWENTY TO TWELVE! I'VE GOT TO RUN! SEE YOU SOON, BILL...!"

"NOT LIKELY," THE GEOLOGIST MURMURED.

"AND THANKS, THANKS A MILLION! YOU'LL REPORT YOUR RESULTS TO THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE, WON'T YOU?"

"YEAH, SURE!," SHOUTED BILL AS HIS FRIEND SLIPPED THROUGH THE LOOSE BOARD. NO REASON NOT TO. HE'D GET A LOT OF CREDIT FOR HIS FORE SIGHT IN DETECTING THE FAULTED AREA. MAYBE A PAPER OR JOURNAL ARTICLE OUT OF IT, TOO. AND HE'D TAKE IT AFTER WHAT HE'D GONE THROUGH TONIGHT.

"NOW DON'T BE BITTER," WHISPERED ABIGAIL, KISSING HIM SELECTIVELY. "YOU WERE MARVELOUS! IT WASN'T THAT DIFFICULT. BESIDES, I THINK IT WAS FUN. AND DIFFERENT. I'VE NEVER BEEN INVITED FOR A SEISMIC READING BEFORE."

BILL SQUINTED GLUMLY INTO THE BRIGHT LIGHT THAT HAD SETTLED ON THEM. "AND YOU'LL BE THE FIRST GIRL TO BE ARRESTED FOR IT TOO," HE SIGHED, KISSING HER RIGHT BACK.

"VAN GROOT! HEY VAN GROOT!" CHARLIE HAD BEEN STUMBLING THROUGH THE TUNNEL FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE HOURS. HE'D WANDERED OFF ON THE INSPECTOR'S WALKWAY, UNMINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT AT ANY MOMENT A TRAIN COULD COME ROARING DOWN THE SUBTERRANEAN TRACK AND SQUASH HIM LIKE A BUG.

"HERE GNOME, HERE GNOME!" THAT SOUNDED EVEN WORSE. IF HE RAN INTO A NIGHT INSPECTOR

HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO ALIBI AWAY "VAN GROOT!" HE DIDN'T THINK HE WAS CLEVER ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN AWAY "HERE GNOME!".

COULD HE? WELL, COULD HE?

"DE PUYSTER!," CAME A FAMILIAR VOICE. "STOP THAT SHOUTING! I CAN HEAR YOU."

"VAN GROOT! I'VE FOUND YOU!"

"EUREKA," THE GNOME SAID DRILY. "I'D SURE BE DISTRESSED IF YOU'D FOUND ME AND I TURNED OUT TO BE SOME ONE ELSE."

TONIGHT THE GNOME ADMINISTRATOR WAS WEARING **BLUE SHARKSKIN**. THE BERET WAS GONE, REPLACED BY A **GUN-METAL BLUE TURBAN**. A **GOLD SILK HANDKERCHIEF** PROTRUDED FROM THE JACKET POCKET, MATCHED BY **GOLD SHOES OF WATER BUFFALO HIDE**.

"WELL?"

CHARLIE TRIED TO CATCH HIS BREATH. IT OCCURRED TO HIM THAT THE STEADY DIET OF BOOZE AND EXERCISE HE'D BEEN EXISTING ON ALL NIGHT DID NOT GO TOGETHER. LIKE, SAY, CHOCOLATE CHIP AND COOKIE...

"IT'S... IT'S ALL RIGHT! EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE **OKAY**. YOU CAN TELL THE RELATIVES UP NORTH THEY CAN LEAVE THEIR MAPLE SYRUP IN THE TREES AND NOT BLACK OUT CITIES OR ANY OF THAT KIND OF STUFF! YOUR MINE WON'T BE HARMED."

"WHY THAT'S **MERRY MARVELOUS!**," SAID VAN GROOT. "HOW-**EVER** DID YOU MANAGE IT? I ADMIT I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH CONFIDENCE IN YOU."

"FRIEND... FRIEND OF MINE WILL PRESENT ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO THE SUBWAY PLANNING BOARD SHOWING THAT THE GROUND, THE AREA FOR THE PROPOSED STATION, IS UNSTABLE. UNSUITABLE FOR PRACTICAL EXCAVATION. IF THEY THINK IT'LL COST THEM ANOTHER **FIVE BUCKS**, THEY'LL MOVE IT TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TUNNEL. IT WAS ALL A MATTER OF JUST USING THE FACT OF YOUR **MINE**, NOT TRYING TO PRETEND IT WASN'T THERE. THEY DON'T KNOW IT'S A MINE, OF COURSE."

"SEISMIC TEST?"

"YEAH. HOW DID YOU KNOW?"

"REASONABLE. THREE OF MY BEST-PICK GNOMES REPORTED IN EARLIER THIS EVENING WITH MIGRAINES."

"SORRY."

"DON'T GIVE IT NO MIND. SERVES 'EM RIGHT." VAN GROOT CHUCKLED WITH SATISFACTION.

"ANYWAY," CHARLIE CONTINUED, "LIVES, TIME, AND DIFFICULTY CANNOT STOP THE NEW YORK SUBWAY AUTHORITY. BUT **MONEY**... YEAH, YOUR MINES ARE SAFE, ALL RIGHT."

"AND SO ARE YOUR PHONE LINES, SO IS THAT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF COMPUTERS."

"IT'LL BE AN **EXPRESS** STATION ANYWAY. IT SHOULDN'T BOTHER YOU TOO MUCH," CHARLIE ADDED. HE WAS GETTING GROGGY AGAIN. HIS STOMACH AND BRAIN WERE GANGING UP ON HIM.

"YOU'VE DONE VERY WELL **INDEED**, MY BOY. I'M **SURPRISED** AT YOU. IT'S BEEN A **LONG TIME** SINCE ANY HUMAN TRADED FAVORS WITH US."

"AW, I'LL BET YOU SET THE WHOLE THING UP. ANYWAY I'VE GOT TO BE HONEST ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T DO IT FOR **YOU**. I DIDN'T DO IT FOR **ME** EITHER. I ... I DID IT," AND **HERE** HE STOOD VERY TALL, STRAIGHT, AND PATRIOTIC, "FOR THE **TELEPHONE COMPANY!**" IT WAS ALL HE COULD DO NOT TO **SALUTE**.

"**BRAVO!** I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD **GIVE** YOU. A LITTLE TOKEN, A **REMEMORANCE**. I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD USE A NICE **SCEPTER?**"

"I'M AFRAID **NOT**. NO CORONATIONS FOR A MONTH, AT LEAST. I'M GOING ON THE WAGON."

"TOO BAD. WELL, HERE. TAKE **THIS**, ANYWAY."

"SURE," SAID CHARLIE AGREEABLY. THE GNOME THRUST SOMETHING INTO HIS RAINCOAT POCKET. "SO LONG, VAN GRAT! IT WAS NICE KNOWING YOU. STOP UP AT MY PLACE SOMETIME. PLAY A COUPLE GAMES O'GI... O'GIN!"

"I MAY **DO** THAT," REPLIED VAN GROOT. "**SOME** NIGHT. I'LL BRING MY OWN **DJINN**."

CHARLIE WAS HALF WAY UP THE TUNNEL WHEN HE WHIRLED AT A SUDDEN THOUGHT. "**HEY!** VAN GREET!"

"YES?" THE VOICE FLOATED DOWN FAINTLY FROM THE DISTANT BLACKNESS.

"WHAT DID YOU GIVE ME?"

"WHY, A **FLAGAN-PHLANGE**, OF COURSE."

CHARLIE GIGGLED AS HE THOUGHT ABOUT IT. HE COULDN'T STOP GIGGLING. HOWEVER, IT WASN'T SO **FUNNY.** THIS MADE HIM NERVOUS AND HE STOPPED. HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO ENTER INTO A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MATTRESS WHEN THERE WAS A KNOCK AT HIS DOOR. IT REPEATED, INSISTENTLY. IT REFUSED TO GO AWAY.

GRUMBLING HE STUMBLED BLINDLY TO THE DOOR AND PEERED THROUGH THE EYEGLASS (NO ONE JUST **OPENS** HIS DOOR AT 2 IN THE MORNING IN NEW YORK). SUDDENLY, HE WAS SOBER. ACTUALLY GONE TO SLEEP FOUR HOURS AGO AND WAS **NOW DREAMING.** BUT HE OPENED THE DOOR.

IT WAS **MISS HIGH PRESSURE AREA.**

SHE HAD A ROBE DRAPED LOOSELY OVER A NIGHTGOWN NO SELF-RESPECTING SPIDER WOULD HAVE OWNED UP TO. **CUMULUS FORMATIONS** WERE DISTURBINGLY APPARENT.

"CAN I COME IN, MISTER... UH..."

"DIMSDALE," MUMBLED CHARLIE. "CHARLIE DIMSDALE." HE TOOK TWO STEPS BACKWARDS. SINCE HE WAS STILL HOLDING ONTO THE KNOB, THE DOOR CAME WITH HIM.

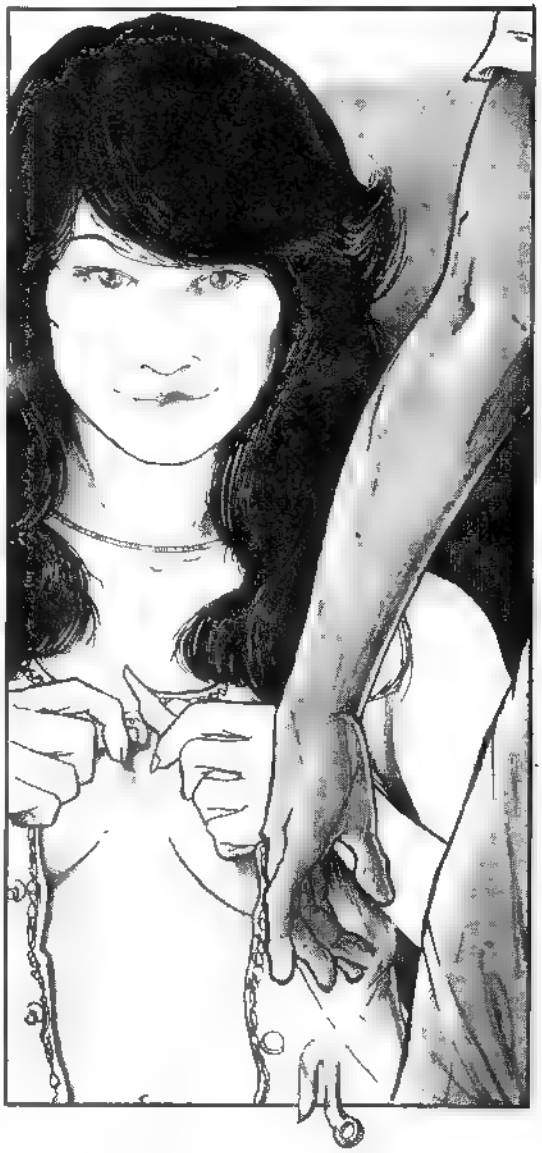
SHE STEPPED INSIDE, CLOSED IT BEHIND HER. THE ROBE OPENED EVEN MORE. SO DID CHARLIE'S PUPILS. PROPORTIONATELY.

"YOU'RE GOING TO THINK I'M JUST **TERRIBLE** (THIS WAS A BLATANT FALSEHOOD), BUT...." SHE WAS STARING AT HIM IN THE STRANGEST WAY. "I REALLY CAN'T... EXPLAIN IT. BUT, WELL, IF YOU COULD JUST..."

SHE TOOK A QUICK STEP FORWARD AND THREW HER ARMS AROUND HIM. FOR SOMEONE OUT OF PRACTISE, CHARLIE REACTED WELL. SHE WHISPERED SOMETHING IN HIS EAR. IT WASN'T A **WEATHER REPORT.** WHAT SHE SAID, SOFTLY, WAS, "IT'LL BE OKAY. HE THINKS I'M IN GENEVA."

CHARLIE HUNG ON AND DIRECTED HER INTO THE APARTMENT, KICKING THE DOOR SHUT BEHIND THEM. HE LISTENED GRAVELY.

NOW HE KNEW WHAT A **FLAGAN-PHALANGE** ATTRACTED.



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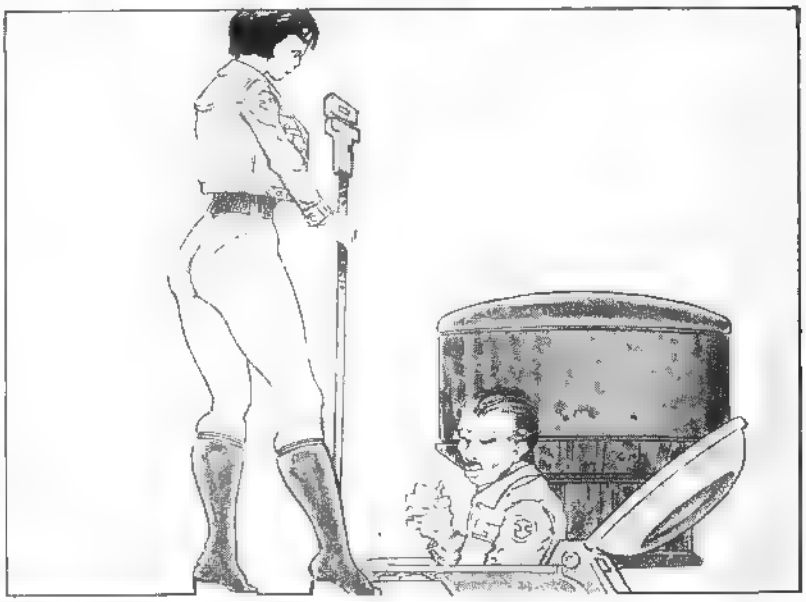
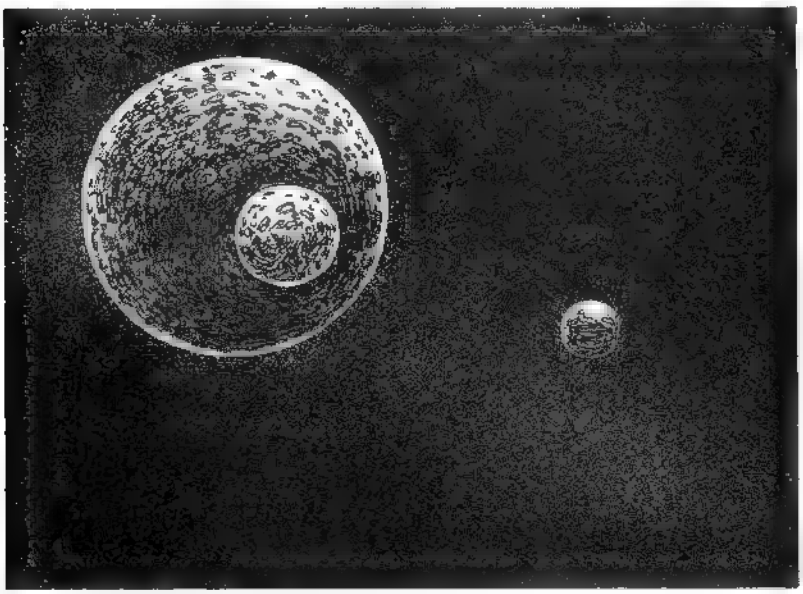
BOYD COTTLE, COMMANDER. STILL SOUNDS FUNNY. EVERYONE ON BOARD IS AT LEAST AS NERVOUS AS I AM. THAT IS ONLY TO BE EXPECTED. I HAVE ASSIGNED ADDITIONAL WORK, BELIEVING THAT TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CALMING POST IGNITION JITTERS THAN A CASUAL DOSE OF CORAPHINE.

AS I MENTIONED, ALL SHIP'S FUNCTIONS ARE OPERATING WITHIN 99.8% OF PRESCRIBED PARAMETERS. EVA ØSTERSUND AND I TRACED THE TWO-TENTHS ERROR TO A MINOR MALFUNCTION IN THE SOLID WASTE RECYCLING CHAMBER. THIS IS A SMALL PROBLEM, BUT IT HAS DENTED MOUTIERS' PROFESSIONAL PRIDE.
DR. OYO IS HELPING HIM WITH THE MATTER AS BEST SHE CAN WITHOUT NEGLECTING HER JOB, WHICH IS PRIMARILY TO KEEP A WARY EYE ON US FIRST DEEP-SPACE TRAVELERS. WE'RE ALL DISGUSTINGLY HEALTHY, SHE INSISTS. PHYSICAL FITNESS WAS AS IMPORTANT A CRITERION IN OUR SELECTION AS ANY MENTAL ABILITIES.





ONLY SIXTEEN YEARS, FOUR MONTHS, TWO DAYS TO BARNARD'S STAR... UNLESS THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER REALLY WORKS. WE'RE NOT OVERLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THAT. HOW AN ALIEN DEVICE ADAPTED FOR HUMAN USE WILL HELP IS BEYOND US. THE EXPERTS CLAIM THAT THE MULTIPLIER REACTS TO MENTAL OUTPUT; TRANSLATING THAT INTO SPACE-TIME DISTORTION LEAPS ALONG OUR LINE OF FLIGHT, BUT EVEN THEY DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW IT FUNCTIONS. ON DAY TWELVE SESE OYO WILL CONDUCT OUR FIRST "SESSION". BELIEVE ME, THE THOUGHT OF SIX TRAINED SCIENTISTS SQUATTING AROUND MUTTERING "OMS" AT BARNARD'S STAR IS MORE THAN A LITTLE JARRING.

DAY 003

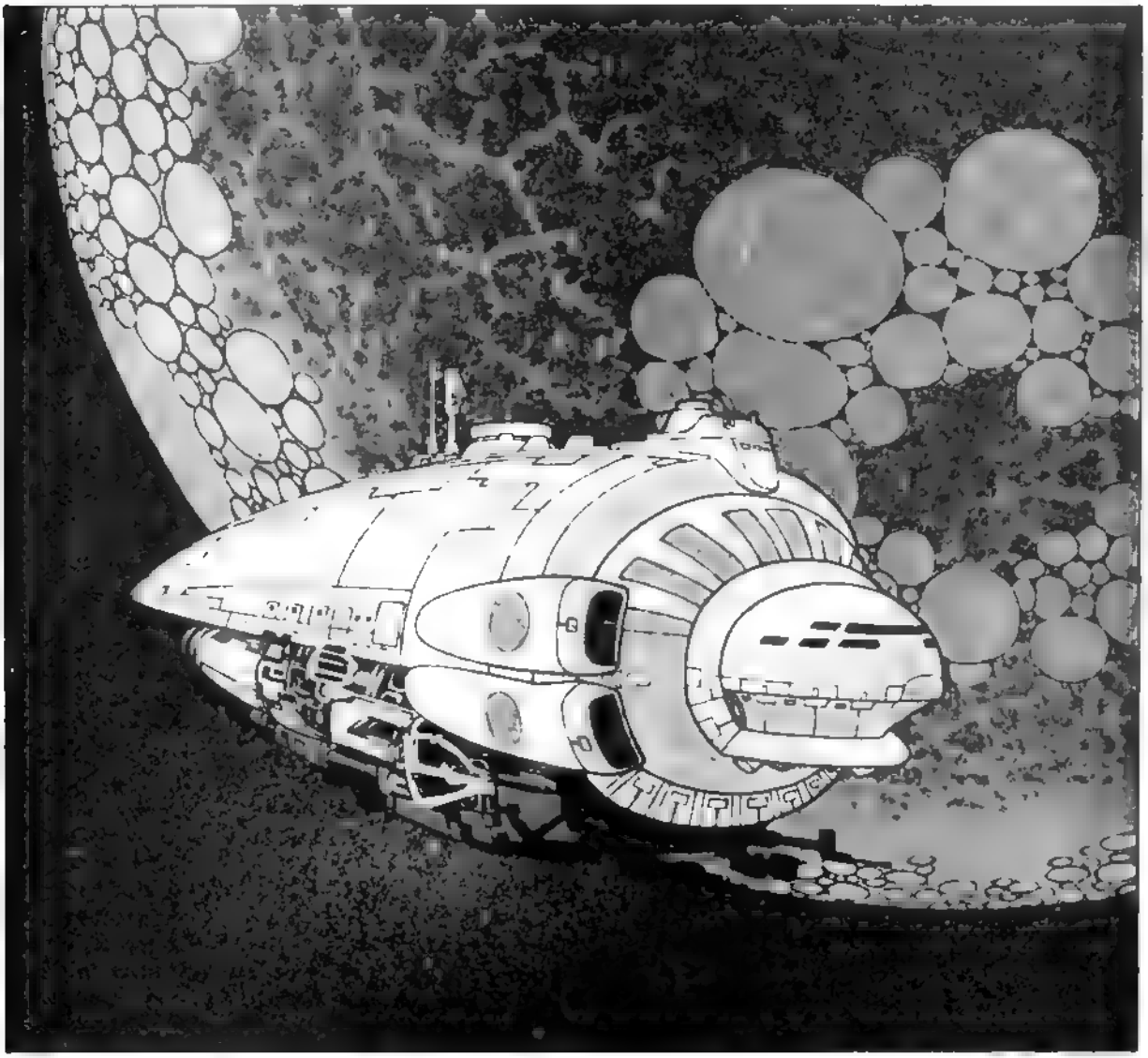
14:32

SMOOTH AS VACUUM SO FAR. MOLITIERS HAS CORRECTED THE PROBLEM WITH THE SOLID WASTE RECYCLER. HE'S NOW FIDDLING HAPPILY WITH HIS HYDROPONICS. HE FIGURES HE HAS THIRTY-TWO YEARS IN WHICH TO CREATE A BETTER CANTALOUPE.

KIM RAHMAN PURRS OVER HER ENGINES WHICH PURR BACK AT HER. OUR RESIDENT STAR-GAZER PAUL USAKOS CAN'T WAIT UNTIL WE LEAVE THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

ASTROGATOR OSTERLUND FOUND A MINUTE COURSE DEVIATION - NOT UNEXPECTED THIS EARLY IN OUR VOYAGE. SHE AND RAHMAN WILL COLLABORATE ON CORRECTION.

THANK BARSOOM FOR THE CITY LIGHTS MESSAGE. YES WE ARE "GO" ASSURE THEM, WITH ALL OF OUR THANKS.



DAY 001

11:43

ACCOMPLISHED URANUS FLYBY AND BEAMED THEM RECORDS AND MESSAGES, OUR LAST CLOSE CONTACT WITH CIVILIZATION.

NOW WE ARE TRULY OUTWARD BOUND.

THE SECOND JUMP IS PERFORMING ABOVE ALL EXPECTATIONS.

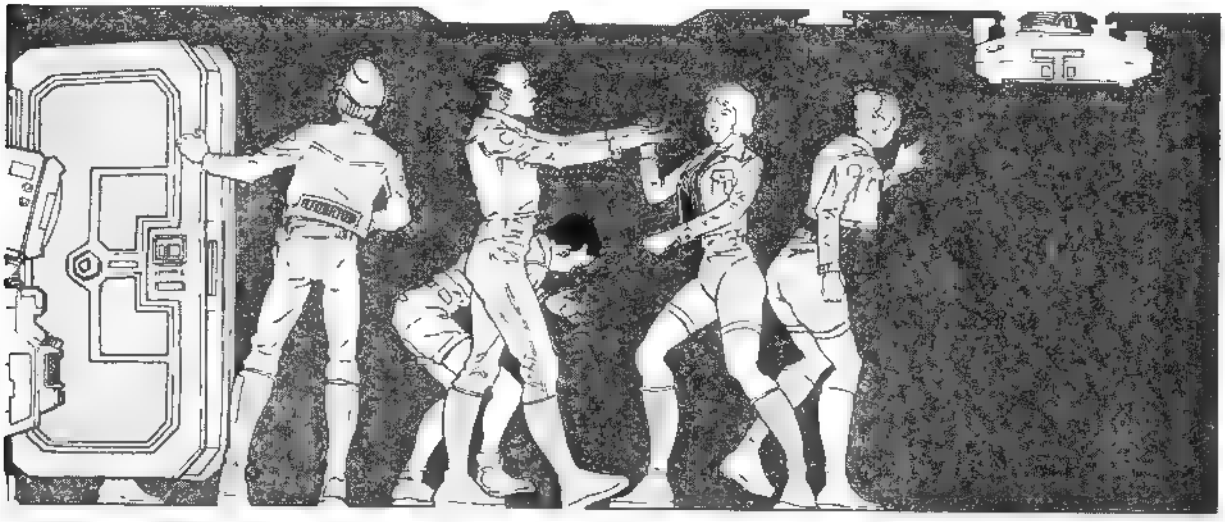
THRUST

STORY ALAN DEAN FOSTER ART: DON MARSHALL

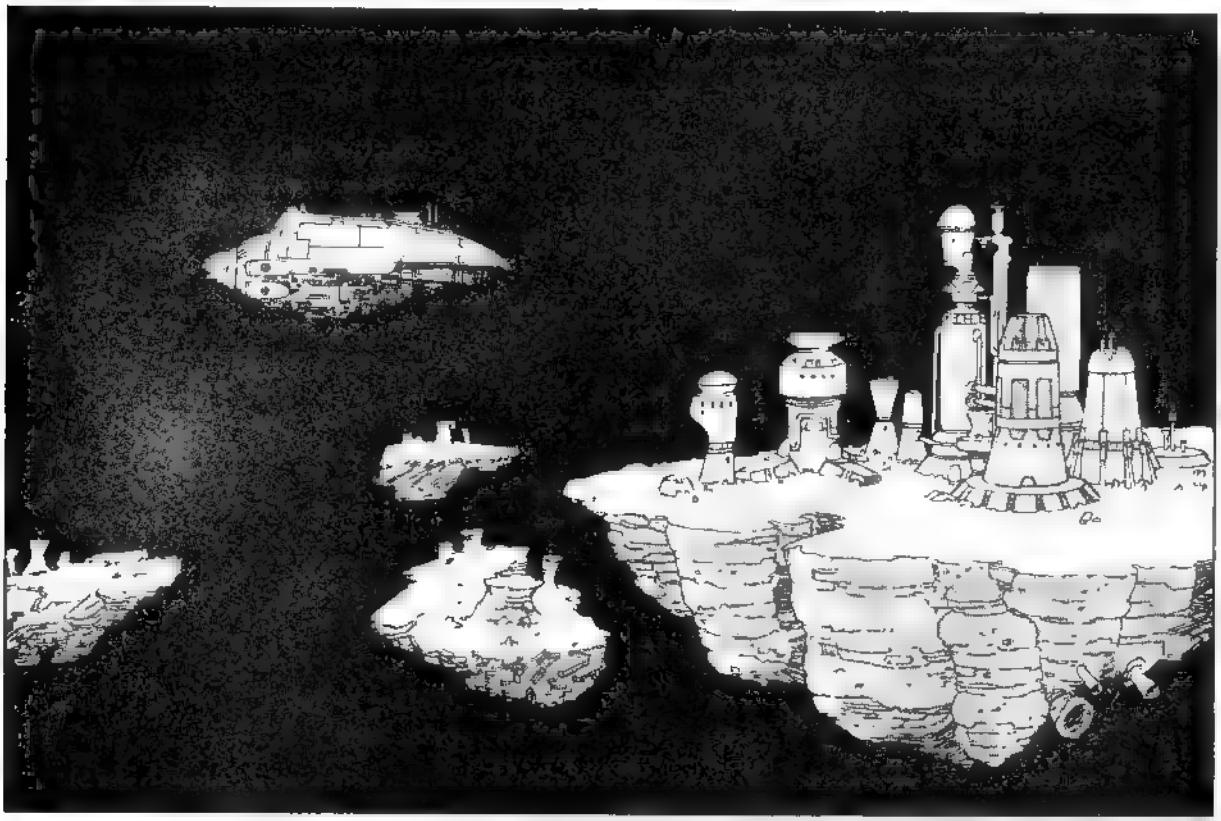
DAY 012

21:58

WE JUST CONCLUDED OUR INITIAL SESSION UNDER DR. OYO'S GUIDANCE. THE OVER ALL REACTION SEEMED TO BE ONE OF EMBARRASSMENT. DR. OYO SAYS THAT REPETITION WILL CURE THIS. BUT I'M NOT SO SURE.



BELATED BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM KIM RAHMAN TO HER FATHER DOWN IN KUALA LAMPUR. BY THE TIME THIS MESSAGE REACHES HIM HE'LL BE OLDER. RECEIVED BIRTHDAY WISHES FROM MR. AND MRS. USAKOS FOR PAUL. HE RETURNS THE GREETINGS AND SAYS FOR HIS DAD TO TELL EVERYONE ON THE RUGBY TEAM THAT HE WON'T BE BACK IN TIME FOR THE PLAYOFFS, BUT THAT HE'LL BE BACK TO COACH THEIR KIDS FOR SURE.



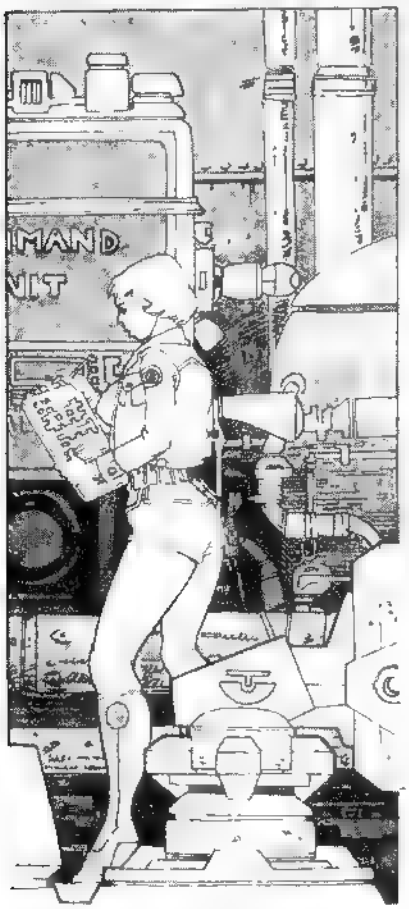
OH, BY THE WAY, THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER WORKS. ØSTERSUND INFORMS ME THAT OUR SPEED HAS INCREASED BY A FACTOR OF... WELL, CHECK THE READOUTS WE'RE BEAMING BACK TO YOU. WHAT IT MEANS IS THAT THIS WONDERFULLY COMPLEX, ALTERED, ALIEN GIZMO YOU'VE HAD US TRUCK PAST PLUTO WILL GET US TO BARNARD'S STAR EXACTLY TWO HOURS, FOUR MINUTES EARLIER THAN PREDICTED. SO MUCH FOR THE "GIFT OF THE ALIENS."

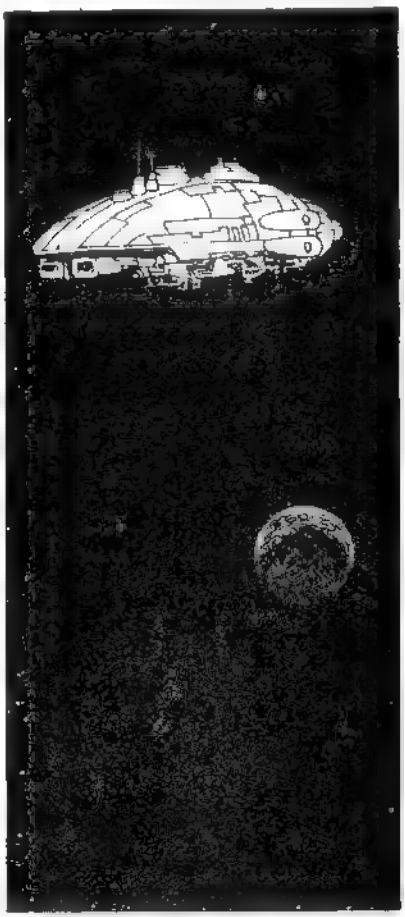
DR. OYO SAYS WE CAN DO MUCH BETTER AT OUR SESSIONS. SURE WE CAN.

DAY 019

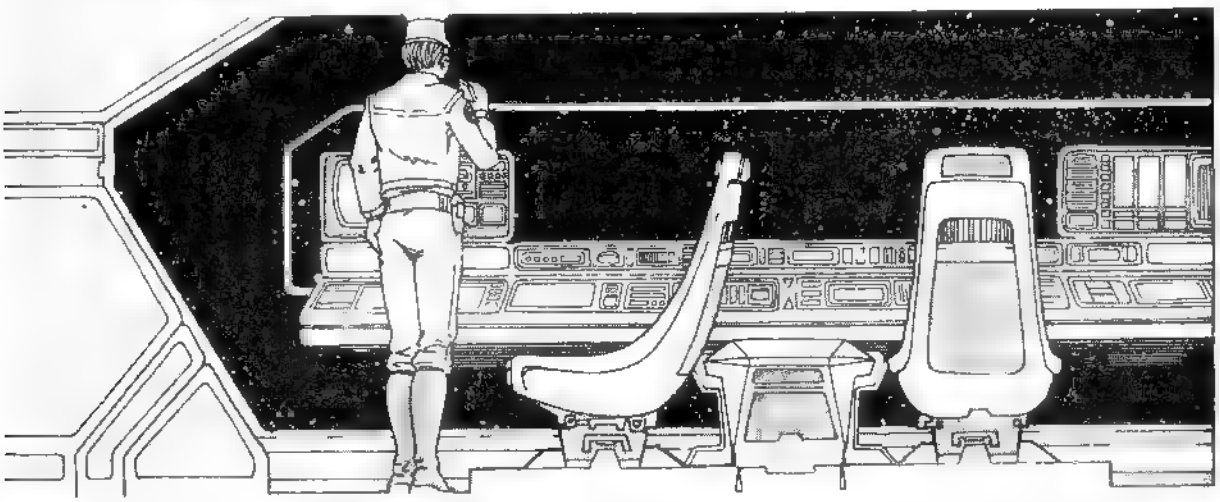
08:27

DR OYO SAYS THAT OUR GROWING BOREDOM IS TO BE EXPECTED, IT WILL PASS AS WE SETTLE MORE FULLY INTO IN-FLIGHT ROUTINE. I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT I'M A BIT WORRIED. ALL OF THE WORK AND GAMES THAT ARE AVAILABLE SEEM INADEQUATE TO RELIEVE THE PRESENT DISENCHANTMENT. THERE'VE BEEN NO OUTWARD SIGNS OF DISCONTENT. WE'RE ALL TOO MENTALLY STABLE FOR THAT, BUT I CAN TELL WHEN SOMEONE IS ENJOYING THEMSELF, AND WHEN THEY'RE JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS. EVEN KIM RAHMAN'S JEWELRY AND SCULPTURE IS SUFFERING. PAUL IS TRYING TO HELP INSPIRE HER





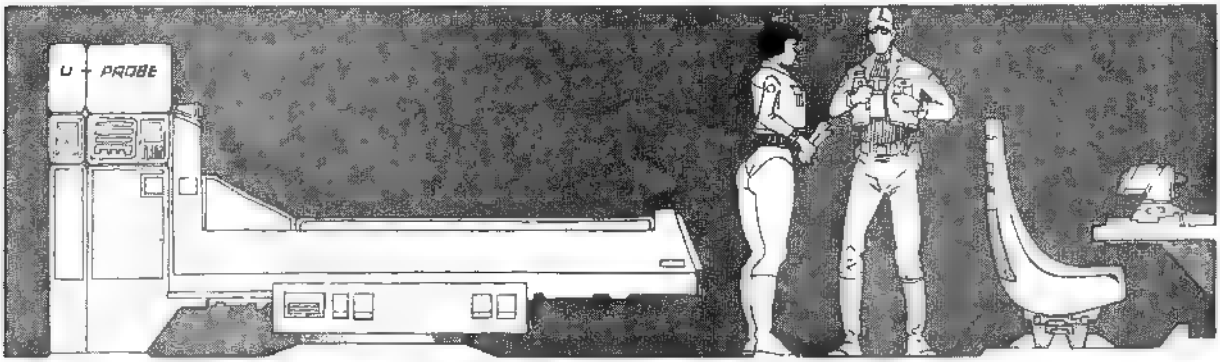
ANOTHER SESSION TODAY. DR. OYO SOUNDED PLEASED. ØSTERSUND DISCOVERED ANOTHER SLIGHT JUMP IN OUR POSITION. WE'LL NOW ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION THREE DAYS, SIX HOURS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. I'M NOT IMPRESSED. IF THE MULTIPLIER CAN'T DO BETTER THAN SHAVE THREE DAYS OFF A SIXTEEN YEAR TRIP, I PERSONALLY DON'T HOLD MUCH HOPE FOR ITS FUTURE BENEFITS TO MANKIND IN REGARDS TO INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL.



DAY 033

06:44

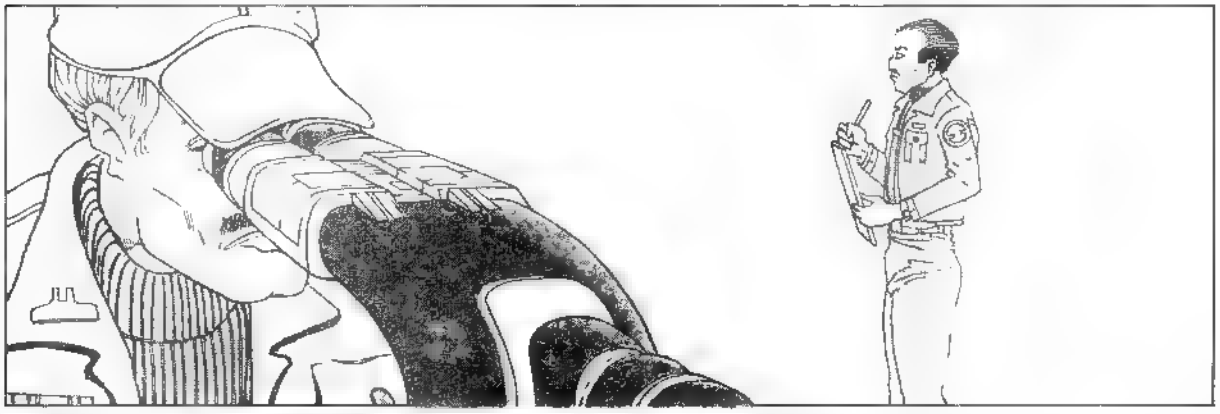
IT APPEARS WE HAVE TO DEVOTE MORE AND MORE TIME TO SIMPLY STAYING SANE. AS EVER, THE SECOND JUMP RUNS LIKE A FINE TIME PIECE. MANKIND CAN BE PROUD OF THIS SHIP. WILL THEY BE ABLE TO BE AS PROUD OF US? I AM TROUBLED BY UNPLEASANT PROSPECTS. DR. OYO ASCRIBES MY WORRY TO MY POSITION AS COMMANDER; MY BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY.



DAY 045

22:35

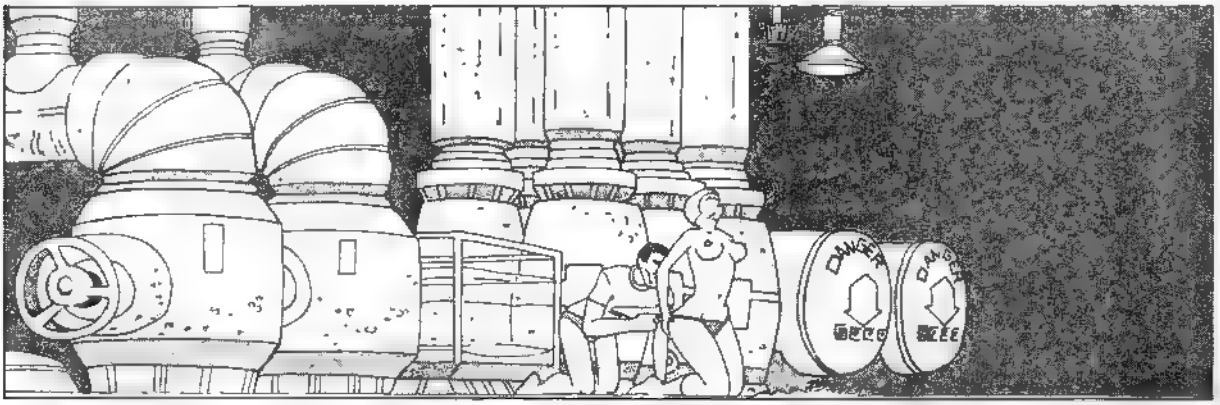
MOUTIERS HAS DISCOVERED MINUTE TRACES OF A COMPLEX PROTEIN CHAIN WHICH SHOULDN'T BE IN OUR FOOD. HE'S PERSONNALLY UNFAMILIAR WITH THE CHAIN AND HAS NO RECORD OF IT IN THE CHEMICAL LOG. IT'S THIS LACK OF A RECORD WHICH TROUBLES HIM. HE'S ASSURED ME THAT THE PROTEINS ARE HARMLESS AND MAY EVEN BE A BENIGN ADDITIVE WHICH SOMEONE NEGLECTED TO LIST IN THE LOG OR COMPUTER AS HE WAS POSITIVE THE PROTEINS WEREN'T HARMFUL. I TOLD HIM NOT TO WORRY AND SUGGESTED HE TRY TO IDENTIFY THE STUFF IN HIS SPARE TIME. IF NOTHING ELSE IT WILL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO DO.



DAY 055

18:49

I WENT TO ASK MOUTIERS ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS PROTEIN HE DISCOVERED TEN DAYS AGO. HE WAS NOT AT HIS STATION. I EXPECTED TO FIND HIM IN THE HYDROPONICS CHAMBERS WHICH I DID. BOTH HE AND KIM RAHMAN. I BACKED OUT QUIETLY. NATURALLY I HAD NO OBJECTION TO MOUTIERS AND RAHMAN ENJOYING THEMSELVES. NO ONE EXPECTED THIS CREW OF YOUNG, HEALTHY GENIUSES WOULD REMAIN CELIBATE FOR THIRTY-TWO YEARS.

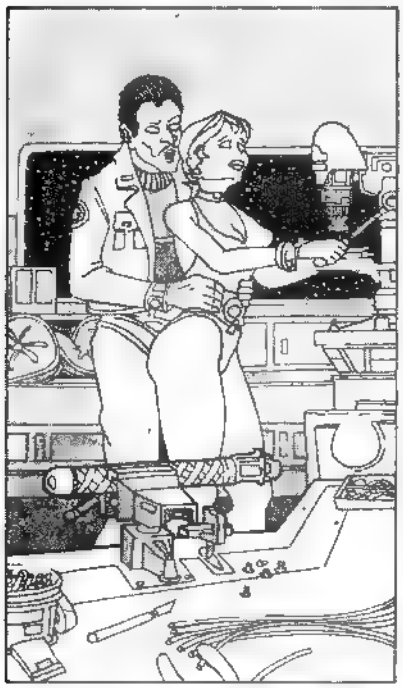


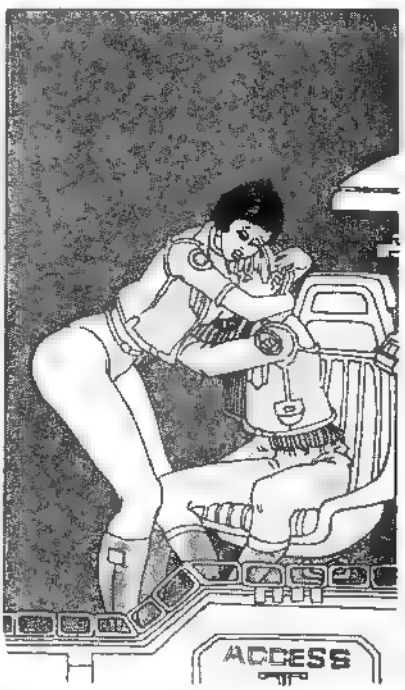
DAY 062

12:43

PROF. RAHMAN AND MOUTIERS ARE NEGLECTING THEIR ASSIGNMENTS REGULARLY NOW. THEY'RE SPENDING ALMOST ALL THEIR NON-ESSENTIAL TIME IN ONE ANOTHER'S CABIN. RAHMAN HAS BEEN USING HER PERSONAL SCULPTING AND JEWELRY-MAKING EQUIPMENT TO FASHION OBJECTS OF A NATURE I PREFER NOT TO DISCUSS AT THIS TIME.

I WAS DEEPLY TROUBLED AT THIS FIRST ACTUAL BREAK IN DISCIPLINE, AND ARRANGED ANOTHER PRIVATE SESSION WITH DR. ÓYO. SHE REASSURED AND RELAXED ME, AS SHE ALWAYS DOES. WHY WORRY SO LONG AS THE SHIP WAS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY? AT LEAST THE BOREDOM OF TWO CREWMEMBERS HAD BEEN ALLEVIATED.



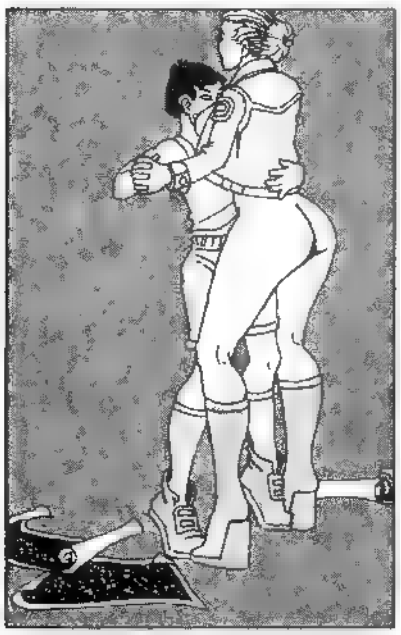


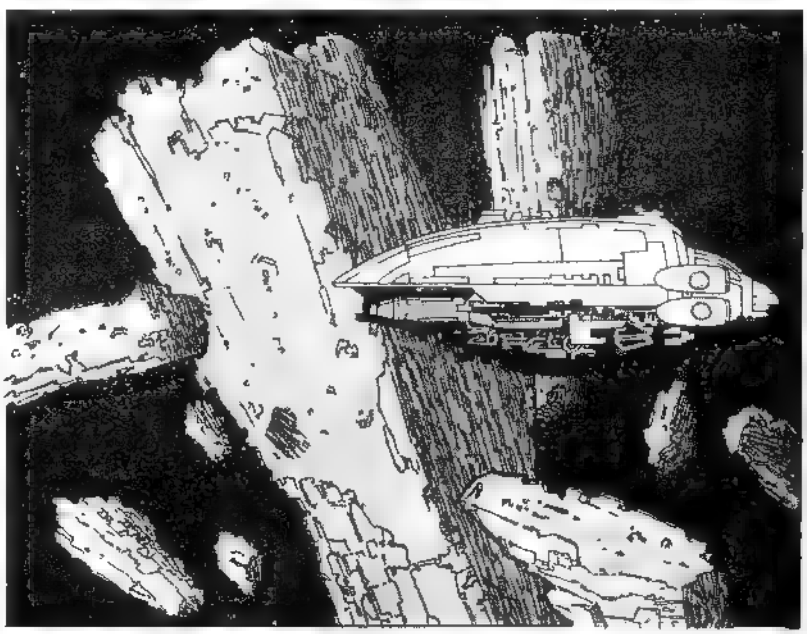
DAY 064

03:08

PAUL USAKOS, OUR ASTRONOMER, IS DISCUSSING ASTROGATION WITH EVA ØSTERSUND. HAS BEEN FOR SOME TIME, IT NOW SEEMS. WHILE THE SECONDJUMP SHOWS NO ILL EFFECTS FROM THEIR NEGLECT, THE ABSENCE OF CONSTANT MONITORING OF COURSE AND SPEED CONCERNS ME. I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO COMPENSATE QUIETLY BY TAKING OVER SOME OF ØSTERSUND'S AND USAKOS' FUNCTIONS.

THE OVERWORK HAS DR. ÓYO WORRYING ABOUT ME.

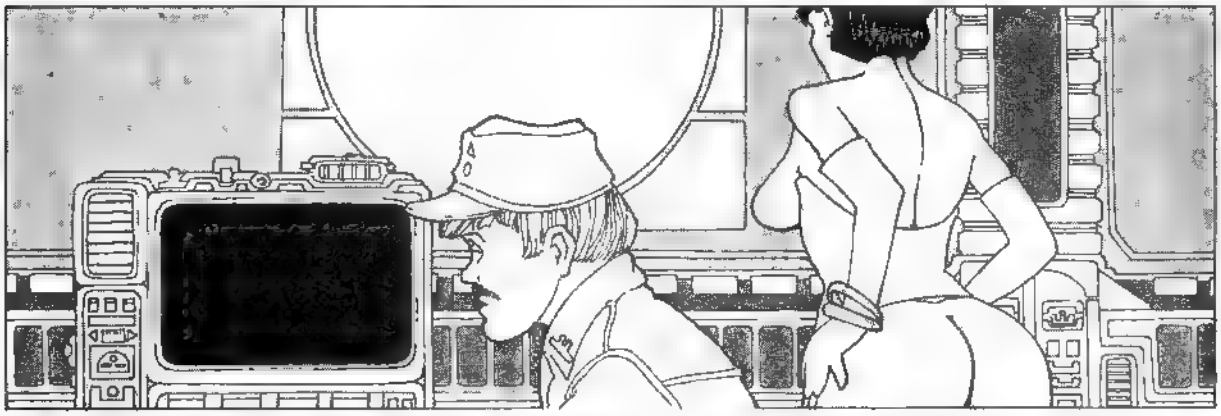




ANOTHER SESSION WITH HER YESTERDAY. SHE IS A CONSUMMATE PROFESSIONAL AND WE ARE

FORTUNATE TO HAVE HER ON BOARD. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR ME

TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT FOR SOMEONE WITH THREE ADVANCED DEGREES, DR. OYO IS REALLY BUILT.



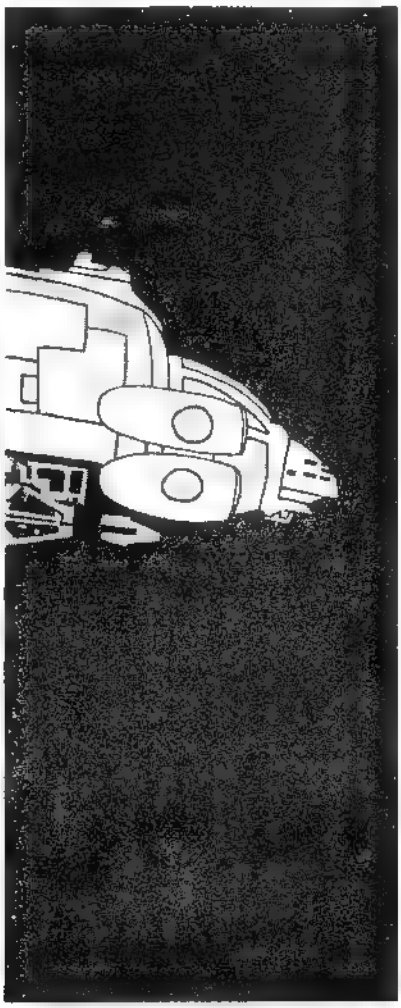
DAY 068

12:52

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH

THE SHIP, BUT NOONE SEEMS TO CARE. ØSTERSUND MUMBLED SOMETHING ABOUT UNEXPECTED DISTORTION OF THE STELLAR MATRIX, BUT SHE WASN'T PARTICULARLY COHERENT. I DID

ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE NATURE OF THE DISTORTION BUT BEFORE I COULD BEGIN I WAS INTERRUPTED BY DR. OYO.



I AM DISTURBED AT THE APPARENT COLLAPSE OF SHIP ROUTINE, BUT THE SECONDJUMP IGNORES US, IT

CONTINUES PLACIDLY ON ITS ASSIGNED COURSE. I CONFESS DR. OYO'S INTERRUPTION WAS NOT

WHOLELY UNWELCOME. SESE ALWAYS KNOWS HOW TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

DAY 073 — 02:51

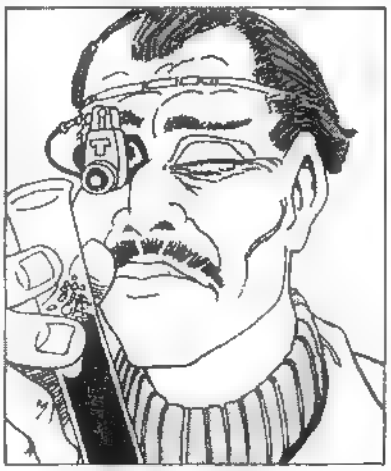
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE WE HAD ANOTHER GROUP SESSION. THIS TIME IT DID NOT INVOLVE MEDITATION. ALL SIGNS OF MOROSENESS AND BOREDOM HAVE VANISHED. I FEEL MYSELF SLIPPING FURTHER FROM REALITY.

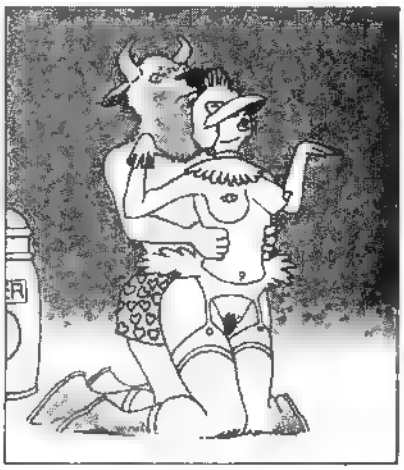
DAY 080 — 00:16

JEAN-JACQUES HAS DISCOVERED A HOST OF NEW PROTEINS NOT LISTED IN HIS CATALOG. FROM TIME TO TIME HE AND I WONDER ABOUT THEIR PRESENCE IN A BASAL FOOD SUPPLY AS CAREFULLY COMPOSED AS THE SECONDJUMP'S.

DAY 083 — 11:04

EVA ØSTERSUND AND PAUL USAKOS ARE TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY THROUGH A DRAMATIC VERSION OF THE KAMA SUTRA.
THE REST OF US ARE INVENTING SOME TRICKS OF OUR OWN, AND HAVING A GREAT TIME!



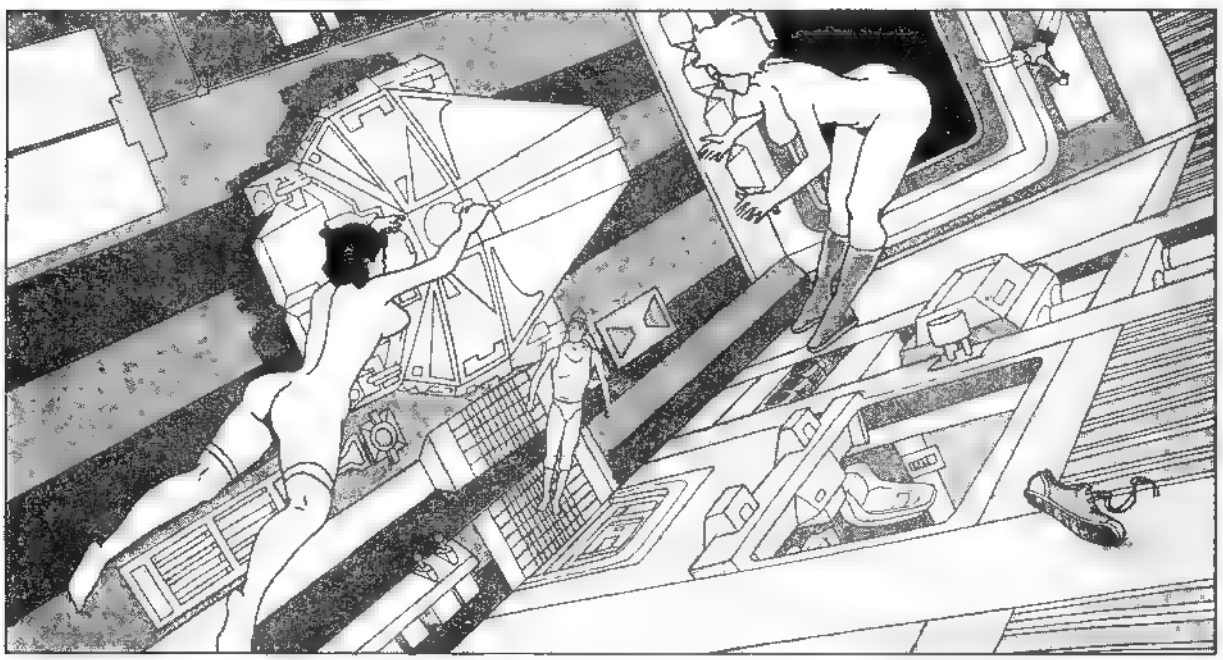


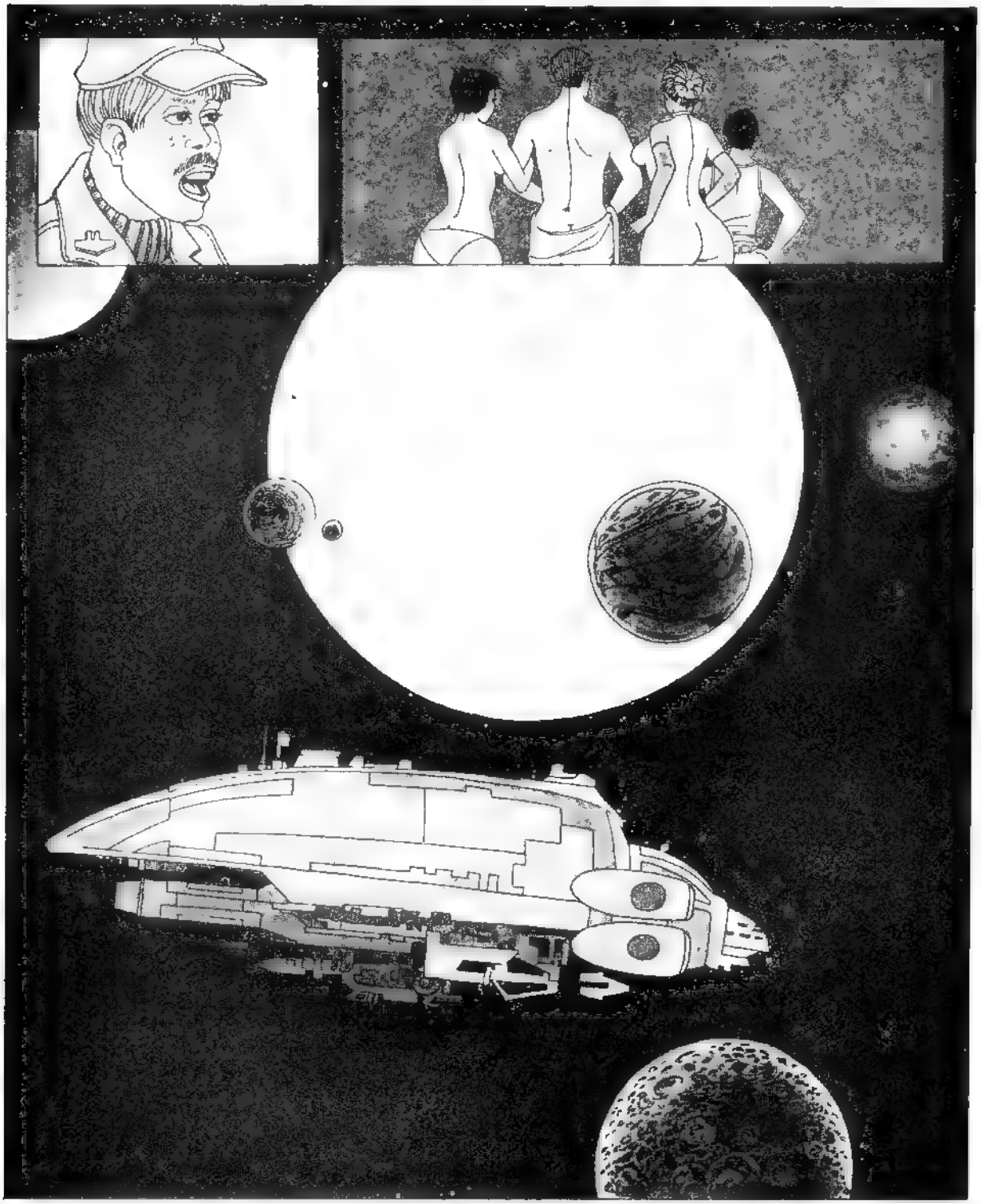
DAY 084 — 04:44

DAY 085 — 02:15

OH, WOW!

TURNED OFF THE CENTRIFUGE YESTERDAY. WE'RE ALL ENJOYING FREE-FALL, BUT I DON'T THINK OUR MUSCLE TONE WILL SUFFER. ZERO GRAVITY PERMITS VARIATIONS SIR RICHARD BURTON COULD NEVER HAVE ENVISIONED. KIM RAHMAN IS PRODUCING SOME REMARKABLE DEVICES IN HER WORKSHOP.





I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT. NONE OF US CAN. THE SECOND JUMP HAS STOPPED. THERE IS A SUN BLAZING OUTSIDE WHICH CAN ONLY BE BARNARD'S STAR. THIS DISCOVERY WAS EXTRA-ORDINARY ENOUGH TO INDUCE US TO RETURN TO OUR STATIONS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT, WE'VE REACHED BARNARD'S STAR. THERE ARE SIX PLANETS NOTED ON FIRST SURVEY, AND TWO... TWO OF THEM ARE EARTH LIKE. THERE IS ALSO A CHANCE, PAUL TELLS ME, THAT THE SIXTH MOON OF THE FIFTH PLANET IS MARGINALLY HABITABLE. THIS EXCEEDS THE WILDEST HOPES OF EVERY ONE OF US, AND I'M SURE OF EVERYONE BACK ON EARTH. WE ARE SIXTEEN YEARS, ONE MONTH AHEAD OF SCHEDULE ... ALL WE CAN ASSUME IS THAT THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER WORKS LIKE NOBODY'S BUSINESS. MY APOLOGIES TO ALL CONCERNED WITH THAT PART OF THE PROJECT.

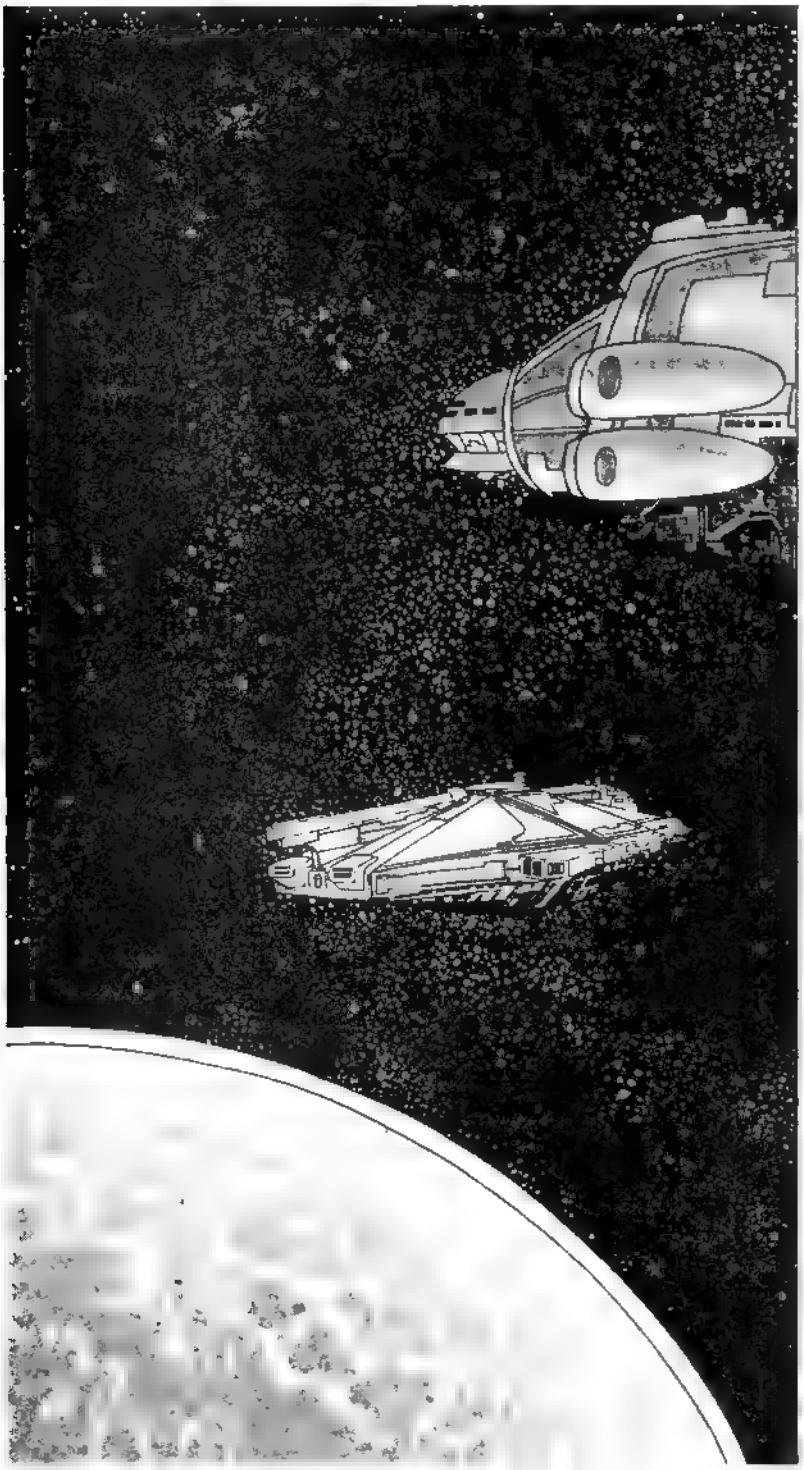
DAY 063

JEAN JACQUES, KIM, PAUL AND SESE HAVE TAKEN THE LANDER DOWN TO THE SURFACE OF BARNARD III, WHICH WE HAVE NAMED AFTER JEAN-JACQUES' SUGGESTION, LA DIFFÉRANCE. LET THE HISTORIANS HAVE THAT ONE TO CHEW ON IN YEARS TO COME. LA DIFFÉRANCE, BY THE WAY, IS MORE THAN NINE TENTHS EARTH LIKE. IT HAS A SLIGHTLY HIGHER GRAVITY, BUT OTHERWISE IS A PARADISE ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM BELOW. NO LIFE HIGHER THAN THE LOWER INVERTEBRATES. EVA AND I HAVE BEEN WORKING THE COMPUTER OVERTIME TRYING TO DISCOVER THE REASON FOR THE INCREDIBLE, SUDDEN SUCCESS OF THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER. I BELIEVE WE HAVE FOUND THE ANSWER.

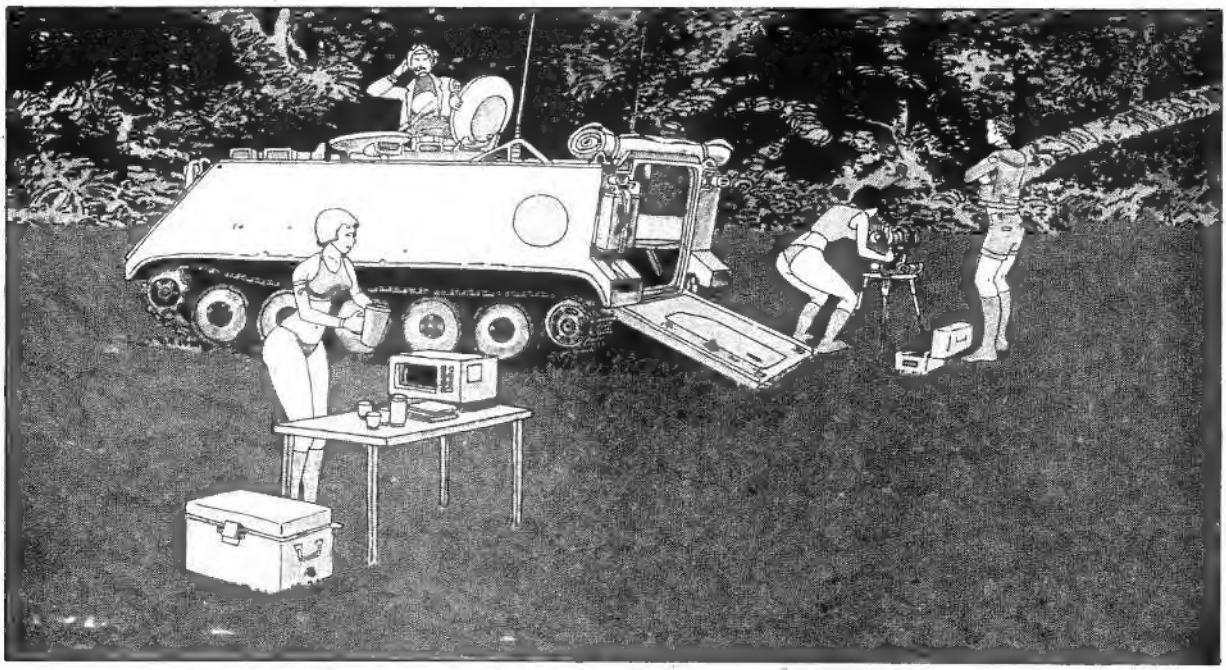
DAY 095

14:10

JEAN-JACQUES AND SESE HAVE BROUGHT THE LANDER UP TO DISGORGE SPECIMENS AND TAKE ON FRESH SUPPLIES. JEAN-JACQUES TOOK A COUPLE OF HOURS AND FINALLY IDENTIFIED THOSE MYSTERIOUS PROTEINS – A RELATIVELY SIMPLE JOB NOW THAT HE HAD AN IDEA OF WHAT TO LOOK FOR.



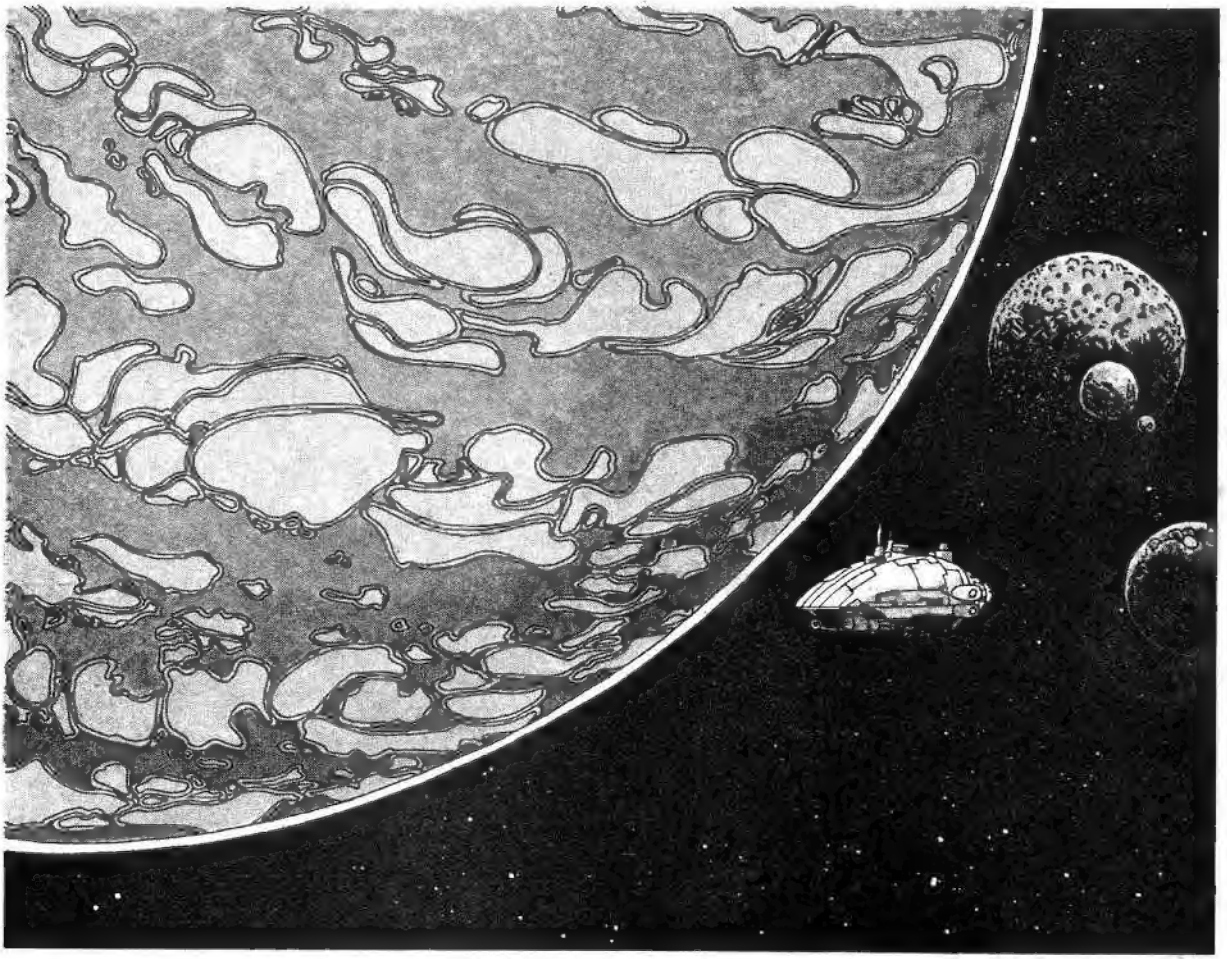
REALLY I DON'T THINK ALL THOSE PHEROMES AND APHRODISIACS WERE NECESSARY.
SESE THOUGHT THAT IF WE'D BEEN TOLD THAT THE BEST THEORETICAL WAY TO OPERATE THE MULTIPLIER WAS TO, UH, TRY AND MULTIPLY - OUR INHIBITIONS MIGHT HAVE FINISHED US BEFORE WE GOT STARTED.
UNDISTORTED MENTAL OUTPUT ENGAGES THE SPACE-TIME DISTORTION FUNCTIONING OF THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER THAT OUTPUT PEAKS DURING THE ACT OF SEX. SCORE ONE FOR THE BRAIN BOYS BACK HOME. BUT I'M STILL NOT SURE I LIKE HAVING BEEN TRICKED INTO IT.



THIS WOULD ALL BE FUNNY IF IT WEREN'T SO WONDERFULLY EFFICIENT. BARNARD IX IS ALSO INHABITABLE. I WILL NOT TELL YOU WHAT EVA AND I NAMED IT, BUT THE REST OF THE CREW CONCURRED.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HOW THE MEDIA COPE WITH IT.

GENTLEMEN, THIS IS A HELL OF A WAY TO RUN A STARSHIP. WE'LL BE RETURNING HOME SHORTLY, AS SOON AS WE'VE THOROUGHLY FINISHED OUR EXPLORATION HERE. PAUL WILL PLAY RUGBY AGAIN AFTER ALL ... THE REST OF US ARE GOING TO DO OUR DAMDEST TO GET HIM HOME IN TIME FOR THE PLAYOFFS ...



NOVELS, & NOVELIZATIONS COLLECTIONS

The Tar-Aiym Krang	Ballantine books, 1972
Bloodhype	Ballantine books, 1973
Icerigger	Ballantine books, 1974
Luana	Ballantine books, 1974
Dark Star	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log One	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log Two	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log Three	Ballantine books, 1975
Star Trek Log Four	Ballantine books, 1975
Star Trek Log Five	Ballantine books, 1975
Midworld	Science-fiction book club, 1975
	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Six	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Seven	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Eight	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Nine	Ballantine books, 1977
Orphan Star	Ballantine books, 1977
The End of the Matter	Del Rey books, 1977
With Friends Like These	Del Rey books, 1977 (collection)
Star Trek Log Ten	Del Rey books, 1978
Splinter of the Mind's Eye	Del Rey books, 1978
	Science-Fiction book club, 1978
Mission to Moulokin	Science Fiction book club, 1979
	Del Rey books, 1979
Alien	Warner books, 1979
Cachalot	Del Rey books, 1979

SHORT FICTION

With Friends Like These; Analog June 1971—The 1972 Annual World's Best SF, ed. Wollheim

Some Notes Concerning a Green Box; The Arkham Collector, Summer 1971

Why Johnny Can't Speed; Galaxy, September 1971

The Emoman; Worlds of IF, October 1972

Space Opera; Adam, February 1973

Pipe Dream; Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, September 1973—Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Stories to be read with the door locked, Random House, 1975

The Empire of T'ang Lang; The Alien Condition (anth., ed. Goldin) Ballantine Books, 1973

A Miracle of Small Fishes; Stellar 1 (anth., ed. delRey), Ballantine Books 1974

Dream Done Green; Fellowship of the Stars (anth., ed. Carr), Simon & Schuster, 1974—Best Science Fiction Stories of the Year (anth., ed. delRey), Dutton, 1975

HE: Fantasy & Science Fiction, June 1976

Wolfstroker (abridged version); COQ, March 1974

Swamp Planet Christmas; Art & Story #2, August 1976

Polonaise; Beyond Time (anth., ed. Ley), Pocket Books, 1976

Ye Who Would Sing; Galileo#2, December 1976 WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE, anthology, Ballantine/Del Rey, 1977. contains all the above except Swamp Planet Xmas & Pipe Dream.

Snake Eyes; Stellar 4 (anth., ed. delRey), DelRey books, June 1978

The Chair; Shadows 2 (anth., ed. C. Grant), Doubleday

Bystander; Issac Asimov's Adventure Mag., Summer 78, issue #1.

AUDIOVISUAL WORKS

Twelve short radio plays, scenes from American History; Audio Bi-j Inc., Sweet Home Oregon, 1973

Star Trek record, original scripts, Passage to Moauv, In Vino Verita, The Crier in Emptiness; Power Records, 1975

Star Trek record, original scripts, To Starve a Fleaver, The Logistics of Stampede, A Mirror for Futility; Power Records 1976

STAR STREK—THE MOTION PICTURE; Original story treatment, 1978

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20 - Where Do You Get Those Ideas?
22 - The Metrognome
39 - Thrust

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